RELIGIO CRITICI;

OR,

CHAPTERS ON . . GREAT THEMES.

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RELIGIO CRITICI;

OR,

CHAPTERS ON GREAT THEMES.

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(Rev. W. Hy. Clavi Tisdall, D.D.)

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The
Rev. W. H. Griffith Thomas, D.
with the Author's
Kind regards.

To

THE MEN OF ENGLAND

THIS ATTEMPT
TO VIEW OLD FACTS FROM
A NEW STANDPOINT
IS INSCRIBED.

4957

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"Where's
The gain? How can we guard our unbelief,
Make it bear fruit to us?—the problem's here.
Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears,
As old and new at once as Nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,
Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps! We look on helplessly.
There the old misgivings, crooked questions are,—
This good God,—what He could do if He would,
Would, if He could,—then must have done long since.
If so, when, where and how? Some way must be,—
Once feel about, and soon or late you hit
Some sense, in which it might be, after all.
Why not 'The Way, the Truth, the Life'?"

BROWNING.

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RELIGIO CRITICI.

INTRODUCTION.

OUR age is an age of great discoveries and of great mistakes, of great learning in the few and great sciolism in the many, of careful and laborious study on the one hand, and of great mental and spiritual laziness and carelessness on the other. Many persons, utterly disbelieving the old saying that there is no royal road to learning, seem to imagine that the perusal of a few magazine articles and clever novels fully qualifies them to form what they fondly deem to be their own "opinions" on all matters human and Divine. The great advances made during the nineteenth century in science, theoretical and applied, in medicine and surgery, in geology and astronomy, in philology—the discovery of the key to unlock the mysteries concealed for ages in the hieroglyphics of Egypt and in the more recently unearthed inscriptions of Assyria, Babylonia, and other ancient lands—all these have necessarily produced a wide enlargement of the field of thought and imagination as well as of knowledge. This has occurred as naturally in our own age as something

very similar did when the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 drove many learned Greeks into exile, and thereby opened to Western Europe the long-lost treasures of Hellenic thought. So also the discovery of America in the same century revealed a new world, and one whose existence had previously been hardly suspected, except by a few dreamers and enthusiasts. But in proportion as the discoveries of our time have been greater and more widespread, in the very same degree have their results been productive of a greater unsettlement of thought and enlargement of ideas. Though the very word *man* is derived from a root which means *to think*, yet it often seems as if in some cases it were used on the *lucus a non lucendo* principle, because so many of us Westerns seem hardly ever really to think for ourselves at all. But some men do think, are forced to think, whether they will it or not; and the thoughts of such, erroneous or not, are accepted only too blindly by the unthinking multitudes of every class, who are ever ready to follow any one who points out to them the path which they desire to walk in. To many persons it is not of so much importance whither the path may lead. It may be the true path, or it may lead them altogether astray; that is of comparatively little importance, provided that it at least claims to be new. As in Athens at a certain most momentous epoch in the history of the world, so in Europe and America to-day, and not least in our own country, a great many people "spend their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing." Of not a few, too, it

may be said that they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth."

So much has already been discovered of which we never dreamt that we feel we need deem nothing too wonderful to aim at, to expect, to accomplish. We are ready to believe many things to be true because they seem to be impossible. We can communicate by telegraph with the Antipodes, with France, and even with America by wireless telegraphy—why should we despair of doing so with Mars in that or in some other way? We send our submarine vessels to the bottom of the narrow seas, why should we not safely navigate the air in airships?

Or again: We have found much that we once thought certain and indubitable to be erroneous, why not doubt everything that our fathers have told us? Shall we not, just for the sake of novelty, prove Mary Queen of Scots a saint, and Tiberius rather an amiable and moral character than otherwise? The "Ancient History of the East," as a Rollin had compiled it for us from classical sources, turns out to be a mere mass of fable; why, then, should we not test Scripture history too, lest there also we may have been misled? Many ancient myths had been mistaken for the records of authentic facts, but are now disproved by the discovery of their origin; how, then, can we resist the desire to test the New Testament narrative and try whether the mythical theory of its origin may not be correct? Sardanapalus, with all his luxury and splendour, has vanished, together with Semiramis, into the dim realm of fable; hence in some minds the question arises, Have we any

better proof of the life and labours of St. Paul? The workings of God in Nature have been shown to us to be far more marvellous than we ever dreamed of, the bounds of the Universe have receded before us as we advanced, until it has been proved to be practically unlimited in extent, as in the poet's dream. The age of the earth on which we live has been found to be immense, and we are compelled to abandon, or at least entirely remodel, many of the preconceived theories which our fathers and we ourselves once mistook for established facts. Must we not, then, doubt every part of what we once thought to be knowledge, and begin again from the beginning to test all things, sacred and secular—religion, systems of morality, all that binds men to their God, and to their kind, and that gives them motive for action here and hope of the hereafter? The spirit of doubt is abroad; but, strange to say, it never impels us to "doubt our doubts" and rarely to test our theories. It too often seems to be assumed that the facts which our fathers knew, lived for and died for, are probably fictions in disguise; but it hardly ever occurs to the majority of men to suspect that the latest hypothesis [1] of a scientist or other man of

[1] "Science does not and cannot dispense with hypothesis, for in the provisional stage, before the complete fusion into accepted science has taken place, one is bound to resort to hypothesis to explain facts. But . . . the true difference between the man of science and the victim of hypothesis is that the former considers *all* his facts and knows that he must start with the observed facts, not with the hypothesis that shall explain them, whereas the latter does not. It is not a question of great difference in reasoning power, but it is a question of starting fair, and so getting the first premiss in your syllogism." ("The Tyranny of Hypothesis," in *Spectator* for September 3rd, 1898.)

learning can be less certainly correct than the law of gravitation or the propositions of Euclid. Hence we are at once too sceptical and too inordinately credulous. We reject the belief in a God and close our eyes to the light of the sun, while we run after the will-o'-the-wisp of spiritualism and lose ourselves in the quagmire of theosophy, or wander in darkness over the trackless wastes of materialism.

Hence it is that so many in our day and generation "follow wandering fires," and, as a consequence, are ready to say, with all their hearts, as the great pessimistic poet of antiquity did—

> "O miseras hominum mentes, O pectora cæca!
> Qualibus in tenebris vitæ quantisque periclis
> Degitur hoc ævi quodcumque est!"

The effect of all this unrest is forcibly expressed by a great French writer, lately deceased, who, writing in the closing years of the nineteenth century, states the case in these words—

"For almost a century France and Europe have been in search of a new God, and towards every wind they seek the echo of good news to come. They need this good news, not only because humanity requires a faith, but above all, because it needs a rule. Every religion which becomes engulphed, even if it be in favour of a better faith, for a time drags morality down into the abyss; and the conscience of our time, in rooting up Christianity, has itself been rooted up.

"Hence, the wail which fills our age, the wail of the orphan who no longer has a Heavenly Father to

speak to and guide him. It resounds from one end of the century to the other, amid the din of arms and of revolutions, amid the triumphant exclamations of science, amid the sarcasms of egoism and scepticism, amid the ceaseless noise of life as it runs its course. . . . See how the century at its waning begins to mutter words of faith, goes in search of a revelation from Ibsen to Tolstoi, from Buddhagāya to Fiesole, with resounding shouts greets a formless God who comes not, and strives to join its hands together to repeat a creed in which it no longer believes. . . . To-day also do 'the fair[1] maidens and young men' look in vain from one sea to the other; from no rock does there gush forth the fountain where they can quench their souls' thirst. The word of God is not in Ibsen, and it is not even in Tolstoi, and neither from north nor east comes the light. . . .

"Science arms man, but directs him not; it illuminates the world for him even to the farthest limits of the stars, but it leaves night in his heart; it is unconquerable, indifferent, neutral, unmoral. Let us set aside applied science, which is evidently but an instrument, and, like every instrument, is neutral between good and evil, according to the hand that employs it. . . . But the other form of science, the true, the grand, that which labours not for hire but is an end unto itself, that which expands the soul to the stature of God, which ennobles it with all the beauty of the Universe, calms it with the silence of the Infinite,—what does it say to the man who comes to ask from it direction for his life? Science imagined

[1] Amos viii. 13.

that she was Queen of the world; but when the Christian who has lost his faith comes and says, "Thou hast breathed upon my Christ and hast reduced Him to dust; thou hast closed to me the pathways to Heaven, thou hast rendered life for me a thing without aim and without result: well then, restore to me what thou hast taken away, tell me what I am to do with my life: command me and I shall blindly obey thee!"—then Science becomes confused and stammers, and with terror and dismay perceives that the only thing which it has to say to him, its great discovery, its last word regarding man's destiny, is the very same expression which was uttered by the religion which it has condemned, 'This world is vain.' Give orders to Humanity! Science knows not how, cannot, dare not: it would be to lie. What commands indeed could it give? In the name of what power? From what imperative necessity? . . . And when Humanity casts itself at the wise man's feet and cries out to him, 'Thou art the oracle of God, the priest of the new times! Speak! What shall I do?'—he can do nought but pour forth floods of bitterness and of renouncement upon a human nature which nevertheless is unwilling to die. Or rather, he answers with ironical and contemptuous advice, recommending pleasure to the cry of holy distress uttered by simple men who are worth more than is he. Or, feeling the feebleness and importance of all his unaided science, he beats his breast in silence. . . . In the sight of science as dealt with by men destitute of conscience, whatever is explained is justified, and man, sprung from the brute, is pardoned when he

returns thither. Hence the conception of law becomes obliterated; between individuals, classes, nations, appetite is proclaimed the measure of right; everywhere is visible the expanding of the self, bestial or sanctimonious; literature is devoted to various forms of rut, and we perceive the utmost refinement of intelligence leading us back in every way to the unbridling of the human brute." [1]

Such is the terrible picture of the tendency of our age, of what it has become in France, of what it is in danger of becoming in other lands. It was so in the time of Nero, of Tiberius, of Caligula, of Heliogabalus. Men had lost faith even in their heathen gods, and had nothing to replace it. An avalanche of evil swept down upon the most highly civilised nations of the world, carrying away all barriers, obliterating all moral distinctions, and threatening to drown the human race in the flood of lust and crime. Pascal has well said that, but for the coming of Christ and the spread of the pure faith of the crucified Redeemer, the whole human race would have perished, and the earth become a desert. And when the *Athenæum* warns us that in certain parts of London to-day, and those not the poorest, there are scenes occurring which could not have been surpassed in atrocity by those which caused Herculaneum and Pompeii to vanish under the ashes and lava of Vesuvius—scenes laid bare to our horrified gaze by the unearthing of those guilty

[1] James Darmsteter, "Les Prophètes d'Israël:" préface, pp. iii., iv., ix., x.

cities in our own day—surely it is time to ask ourselves whither our own generation is tending, and to what fearful goal we are in danger of progressing.

What is life? Whence came it? What is its object, its aim, its end? Is there a hereafter, or is there not? Is there in man a spirit distinct from matter? Is there any real difference in kind, or only a distinction in degree, between right and wrong? Is there a God? If so, have we faculties to enable us in any degree to apprehend Him? Is it possible to know anything certain about Him? Does he care for us? Has he revealed himself to us, and how? Which of earth's many religions of the past or the present is the true one? Are all alike false, or are they all partly true and partly false? Is or is not the highest wisdom of all the ages contained in the motto of the worldling of old, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die?"

These are only a few of the many problems which present themselves, and demand solution from the men and women of this generation. These questions vary much in importance, though they are all of great interest. Some of the matters with which thought busies itself to-day, may, without conscious loss to humanity, wait ages for their answer. Others, again, concern only a few of us, and are matters rather of speculation than of "practical politics." Others, such as those we have indicated, are of vital importance to every one of us. We *must* find a solution to them, unless our life is to be utterly shipwrecked.

Some of us doubtless belong to the class of happy

but thoughtless persons who, as Montaigne has it, believe but do not reason. Such men are comparatively few in our days. Some belong to his third class, who, having found the answer to the most important questionings of their hearts, are both reasonable and happy. They have found a ground for their faith, they know Him whom they have believed. But the great majority of those who are not utterly careless, as so many are even in these momentous days, are either still vexed with doubts, "in wandering mazes lost," in sadness too deep for tears, or, at least, at one time were so, and still remember the pain and grief through which they once passed when they walked in the valley of the shadow of death and felt themselves utterly alone amid its gloom.

It is not presumptuous, it is but the clear call of duty, for one who is gratefully conscious that he has been led through the darkness to strive to indicate to others the path which he has trodden and which has brought him to the light of day. Some of our problems do admit of solution, and it may not be profitless to endeavour to show what results stand the severe test of experience.

The author of these pages has himself known the agony of doubt. Years ago his studies, even the study of theology, made him a sceptic in the true sense of the word. His doubts and difficulties grew upon him so much that even the very existence of God seemed for a while doubtful. All his faith in Christ was shaken. Life in consequence seemed to him, as it did to Buddha, a blank, a desert, unmeaning, delusive in its joys and pleasures, and real only in

its misery and woe. At last one thing appeared to him to be clear, that, if there was a God, He could not but love truth and honesty, that He would help and guide one who honestly desired to know the truth and to *do* His will. Hence it seemed to be a clear duty to seek the truth, to test Christianity in order to learn whether it were true or false. It appeared evident that, either Jesus Christ must be truly what He claimed to be, or else that He must have been a blasphemer, a deceiver of the people, worthy of the death which His enemies inflicted on Him. These seemed to me to be the only alternatives between which it was necessary to decide. The view which some now endeavour to advocate, teaching that He was neither true nor false, that He was the best of men, and yet deceived the world and taught false views of God, that He was a dreamer, an enthusiast, whom we may pity and admire but neither believe nor follow, never really commended itself to my mind. It still seems to be wanting in logic, in honesty ; to be an endeavour to shirk inquiry and avoid the performance of duty ; to be an insult to our reason and to the conscience of humanity. It has certainly never obtained acceptance among men engaged in the battle of life, and face to face with its stern realities, needing to know the truth and not easily satisfied with platitudes. This view might, perhaps, have commended itself to the *dilettante* philosophers of the Areopagus, who put Paul off to a more convenient season which never came ; it may commend itself to the wealthy, the thoughtless, the sciolist of our day ; but assuredly it can never be received by earnest and

thoughtful men who want to know and do their duty to God and their fellow-creatures. So it then seemed to me, and so I confess I now believe.

The whole of this life and the hereafter evidently rested on the correctness of the solution which I sought to this inquiry. In God's presence, and with heartfelt prayer for His aid, I therefore solemnly vowed to test the matter thoroughly. I resolved that, should the result of my inquiry be to prove that the Gospel was false, and the claims of Jesus of Nazareth a baseless delusion, I would never rest until I had devoted my whole life to the task of opposing the Gospel and the Christian faith. But, on the other hand, honesty compelled me to resolve in the most solemn manner that, should the Gospel on examination prove true and Jesus to be what He most unmistakably claimed to be, then I would devote myself, body, soul, and spirit, to the clear duty of teaching others the truth—that I would live and die in the service of the Master, who had lived and died and risen again for me and for all men.

The task of seeking the truth is at all times a serious one; the method I adopted was, as I afterwards discovered, not the best possible. It seemed to me necessary, as one part only of the undertaking, to read the sacred books of all the nations of the world, ancient and modern, not in translations but in the original language of each. The acquisition of these languages naturally took time and involved not a little toil. After more than twenty years' consecutive study, pursued mostly in the East and among the people who themselves profess, or whose

ancestors professed, these faiths, the task is only now approaching completion. The study of Assyrian, ancient Egypt, and other languages was necessary for another reason also—to enable me to test the historical truth of the Old Testament in the light of archæological discoveries. This, of course, formed only a part of the task which I had imposed upon myself. All my studies, whether of science, philosophy, ethics, or philology, were devoted to the one great object of search, until the Truth became clear, and ever since they have been directed towards the enlargement of my apprehension of the Truth, and the testing of theories and conclusions. Long before the work was concluded—if it can even now be said to be concluded—the light grew strong enough to walk by. The Dayspring from on high shone into my soul, and as the light grew the gloomy shadows of doubt vanished, until the daylight of the Sun of Righteousness arose upon me with its healing rays. Now I know, though only in part, and with the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who once was what I might have become, an adversary of the Cross of Christ, I can say, "I know Him, on whom I have believed." Many things are still obscure; but I am content to await in perfect trust the removal of the veil, believing, where as yet I cannot see, in the sure and certain hope that, in the light of the Master's presence, when the clouds have rolled away, I shall see Him as He is, and know even as also I am known.

As this little book is anonymous, I have written more freely about myself than I should otherwise have ventured to do. But I am only one among

many whose experience has been the same in the main. We are now Christians. As followers of Him who is the Truth, we are conscious that it is our duty to try all things, and to hold fast only that which is proved to be good and true. We believe, as Augustine did, that wherever we find any portion of truth, it belongs to our Lord, and should be claimed for Him. Hence we gladly avail ourselves of all the results, the proved results, of all investigations, in whatever field of learning. Only we claim the right to test them for ourselves. We decline to submit to authority in matters of Science that we cannot submit to in matters of religion. We call no man our master upon earth. We are not prepared to accept unproved theories or hypotheses in preference to proved and tested facts. As for our faith, we shrink from no testing of its value, feeling sure that, if the jewel we have discovered is genuine, it will come uninjured out of every examination, and shine all the brighter for the testing process. If it does not, we shall be well rid of it. We want no paste diamonds, and we are confident, from our experience, that those we have are genuine. We have doubted, as Thomas did of old; but now that we are able to cry with the erstwhile doubting Apostle, "My Lord and my God," we long to hold out a helping hand to those who are still wrestling with the troubled sea of darkness and misery and doubt. Others are still wandering in the darkness and struggling with the despair which once tortured our very souls; and we yearn to lead them, humbly and haltingly it may be, but lovingly and in perfect trust, to behold with

us the wounded Hands, to take refuge in the pierced Side.

In this book I have not tried to put down my conclusions, step by step, in the order in which I reached them. Nor could I, unless I were to write not a volume but a library, give all the arguments on both sides and all the reasons for advocating the adoption of the solutions of the problems dealt with as they are here offered for the reader's consideration. The arguments against Christianity will be found readily accessible in many forms. Here I have endeavoured as briefly as possible, and with all diffidence, to record what seem to me a few satisfactory arguments in support of what I believe to be the truth. My conclusions may to some appear unduly definite, to others, again, almost heretically indefinite. But I cannot conceal what I believe to be the truth, or pretend to know and understand fully matters which are as yet too deep for me. I have in each case given a *minimum* conclusion, often stating far less than I feel, far less than I believe. The book makes no pretence to deal at all fully or completely with any one of the great themes of which it treats. Yet if these pages are used to give help and comfort to any of my fellow-pilgrims who are still seeking the truth, the object which I have in making this confession of a critic's faith will have been attained.

CHAPTER I.

GOD.

THE history of the philosophies and pseudo-philosophies of the last nineteen hundred years —nay more, the study of all the religious and philosophical systems of the human race, from the earliest period of which we have any knowledge even up to the present day—has most conclusively proved that the Jesus of the Evangelists, Jesus of Nazareth as pourtrayed for us in the Four Gospels, has given us a conception of the Divine Nature which appeals to humanity everywhere, and which satisfies the needs of the human heart, the human conscience, the reason of mankind. The God thus revealed to us in Jesus is the only one whom enlightened humanity can ever truly believe in, can at least ever worship or ever love. The gods of the heathen and that of the Muhammadan world cannot be adored by any man of education to-day. The various and self-contradictory deities evolved by philosophers from their own inner consciousness—from the "Existent-non-existent" of the Vedânta, or the Spherical God of Plato's philosophy down to the "Power not ourselves that makes for Righteousness" of one nineteenth-century philosopher, or the Great Unknowable of another—cannot be worshipped

in any true sense, for they are all alike Unknown Gods, and must ever be felt to be so. Men may talk about them ; but they cannot know them, cannot worship them, cannot love them. They are all man-made deities, as truly as ever were the idols of our forefathers, whose places they strive to take. The gods whom those idols were intended in some degree to represent were at least superior to these modern brain-evolved idols in this, that men could at least believe and did believe in their personality. Odin and Thor were at least supposed to stand in some real relation to men ; they could, it was thought, see and hear their worshippers. But our new gods have neither eyes to see nor ears to hear. Prayer to them is meaningless. Odin could, it was believed, nerve the arms and cheer the heart of the warrior manfully contending on the battlefield, or amid the wild din of the waves, as the Vikings darted over the ocean in their pirate-barks. The "Unknowable" can do no such thing. The gods of the heathen had descended to them from their ancestors ; and the legends which told about them contained fragments of the early faith of humanity, making life real and earnest, fought out in the presence of the gods. The grave was not its goal, for the Valkyries waited hovering over the battleground to waft on their wings to Valhalla, Odin's "Hall of the Slain," those who had quit them like men and turned not their backs on death. But we have outlived all that, and can never return to the faith of our heathen forefathers. If we have also outgrown the faith of Christ, then what are we to accept in its stead ? This is a difficult question

to answer. One thing at the very least is certain, that no purely philosophical idea of God, ancient or modern, has ever appealed or can ever appeal to the human heart, can ever solace grief, can ever give one single human soul a motive for doing good, power to resist evil, a hope for eternity.

Plato[1] and others[2] of old believed what Anthropology by the mouth of a De Quatrefages[3] has since proved to be true—that the one great distinction between man and the lower animals is not reason, but the Religious Instinct, which man alone has, which he has everywhere, and which, as far as (not theory but) evidence goes, he has always had. This is a fact which we must never forget, and which must enter into all our theories of the Universe and of human life. This Religious Instinct leads men to worship. It must have some meaning, some aim, some purpose. Even if we adopt some form of the evolution theory as correct, the evolution of this part of our nature cannot have occurred fortuitously. At any rate, we have the instinct, inasmuch as we are not brutes, and it requires satisfaction, unless we are prepared to descend the scale of existence and to become merged among the members of the brute creation from which some tell us we sprang. Where, then, in modern times is this instinct of worship to

[1] Ἐπειδὴ δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος θείας μετέσχε μοίρας, πρῶτον μὲν, διὰ τὴν τοῦ Θεοῦ συγγένειαν, ζώων μόνον θεοὺς ἐνόμισε, καὶ ἐπεχείρει βωμούς τε ἱδρύεσθαι καὶ ἀγάλματα θεῶν ("Protagoras").

[2] *E.g.* Lactantius, who says, "Hominum atque mutorum vel solum vel certe maximum in religione discrimen est" (Inst. Div., lib. ii., cap. 3).

[3] "The Human Species," *passim*.

find an object? We cannot worship a humanity, which we are assured is of bestial origin. This, indeed, is another of the modern idols offered for our worship, but in vain. We know too much of our fellow-men, too much it may be of ourselves, to accept such an object of adoration. Hence we repeat, without fear of contradiction, that experience has shown that, at the present time, at the beginning of the twentieth century after Christ's birth, the God revealed to us by Jesus of Nazareth not only in His words but in His life and character is the only possible Deity whom we can worship in any true sense. Him we can know sufficiently to enable us to form some conception of Him, however inadequate. We can love Him who, as even the personal character of Jesus shows, has loved us. This love of God as manifested in Christ Jesus has been, in all ages since Jesus died, the one motive power which has produced upon multitudes of men the most marvellous and beneficial results. It has inspired martyrs, it has formed saints, it has recovered the fallen—a Paul, an Augustine, a Bunyan, a John Newton—it has turned the world upside down. Love to Christ, the image of the God He revealed, still acts in millions of lives, keeping many of us from sin and vice and selfishness, driving out all that is base and unmanly, shaming us when we grow lukewarm or careless, urging us to ever fresh efforts for the good of others. Of the triumphs of the Gospel it is needless to write. But one thing is clear, from all that we know of the world in the past and in the present, that humanity has to choose between the God revealed by Jesus of

Nazareth and no God at all. No other God is possible for us. Our reason may and does lead us to conclude that, even from a reverent consideration of the God shown us by Jesus ("He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father"), we may still be unable "to find out the Almighty unto perfection," and to that extent we are all Agnostics. But it also leads us to infer that this is so, not because of any defect in the portraiture thus presented to us, but from the limitations and the finiteness of our present state, or, it may be, of our humanity itself. The finite can never fully comprehend the Infinite. The ocean of the Divine Nature cannot be contained in the little vase of our intellects. Yet even a vase may contain enough of the ocean to enable us to know something definite regarding the nature of that ocean, though neither its power, its grandeur, or its extent. Again, I say, we cannot even now form any conception of God which is more worthy, nobler, and more attractive than that presented to our hearts and minds in the character of Jesus, as far as we can apprehend the perfection of that character.

The proof of this is not far to seek. Men in all the ages have tried and have failed to conceive God. What conception of God, ancient or modern,[1] is

[1] Of one of the modern conceptions of God as entertained in the new theology of Scotland, a Scotch poet of our day has well written:—

"A God wha widna fricht the craws;
A God wha never lifts the tawse;
Wha never heard o' Moses' laws
On stane or paper;
A kind o' thowless Great First cause,
Skinklin' thro' vapour."

(Hendry, "The Beadle's Lament.")

worthy to be brought even for a moment into comparison with that revealed in Christ? Religions and philosophies, even before Christ's advent, spoke of God at times as One, as Almighty, as wise, as good. Some even ventured in a confused way to call Him Father, Heaven-Father, "Alfadhir." But all these were but words, valuable indeed as guesses which bore evidence to the needs, the instincts, the hopes of humanity, but which went and could go no further. They told what men hoped, rather than what they knew, *about* God. They did not enable men to *know* God as their Father in any true sense, while they were almost everywhere corrupted until the idea which they represented ultimately became that most blasphemous one of which the *linga* in India and the rites of Mylitta in Babylon became the symbols.

Christ did not *theorise* about the Divine Nature as the philosophers had done and have done ever since: He did not teach as the scribes. He *lived* His teaching. He showed in action that there was a power residing in Himself, which could not only condemn sin but could also pity and love and raise the sinner to a holy life. He manifested the existence of a love of which that of a father, a mother, is only a faint adumbration, or at most an emanation, an evidence, in some manner a reflexion. He not only showed clearly the existence of the Divine but was Himself the one revelation of the Divine. Hence it is that, even to the present day, any one of us who attempts to conceive to himself the highest idea of God to which the human mind has ever been able to attain,

or which it has been able in any degree to grasp, will find that he has but recalled to mind the character of Jesus of Nazareth. Even M. Renan says—and the admission is worthy of note as coming from such a source—"The highest consciousness of God which has ever existed in the bosom of humanity has been that of Jesus."[1] Whoever among us worships God in any real sense—whether he be a Trinitarian or a Unitarian—will, on examination, find that, whether he wills it or not, he is in reality adoring Jesus of Nazareth. With all the efforts of all the greatest and holiest men who have lived since the birth of Christ, we have never been able to form any higher conception of God. Hence, whether we regard it as perfect or not, we must grant that, being man's most lofty conception of the Divine, it must therefore be the truest. It is impossible to suppose that this conception is too good to be true. Otherwise we find ourselves compelled to believe that man, the creature, is able to form an idea of God which is nobler and higher than the original, of which all that is best and highest in the thoughts of men must be a reflexion, however imperfect. This would render

[1] "Vie de Jésus," p. 75. He also says, "A lofty notion of the Deity, which he did not owe to Judaism, but which appears to have been wholly the creation of His own great soul, was, in some way, the principle of all His strength," p. 73. Speaking of Jesus' conception of God as "our Father in Heaven," he says, "This is His great act of originality: in this He owes nothing to his race. Neither Jew nor Muslim has ever understood this delightful theology of Love. The God of Jesus is no fateful Master, who slays us when He pleases, condemns us when He pleases, saves us when He pleases. The God of Jesus is our Father: He is the God of humanity" (p. 77).

man superior in mind and thought to his God. The *reductio ad absurdum* could not be carried further.

Now, since all other conceptions of God—those of a Socrates, a Plato, a Spencer, a Kant, or even those of an Augustine, a Luther, a Calvin—fade before the revelation of God in Christ as stars before the rising sun; and since examination shows us how imperfect, how unworthy, even the best of other men's apprehensions of God, as learnt from their writings (much more their representation of Him in their lives and characters), have ever been, it becomes clear that Jesus of Nazareth as pourtrayed in the Gospels is the only one revealer of the Divine Nature that has ever appeared among men. Others have talked of God, Jesus has shown us God. All the ages that have passed since the words were first written have proved the truth of the verse, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath revealed Him."[1] This proves Christ Jesus to be the *Logos*. And this argument does not depend upon Bible verses, or even upon the authenticity of the Gospels in their present form. It springs from the reason of things, it rests upon the evidence of reason and of indisputable fact. Objectors may prove, if they can, that St. John—or whoever they may imagine the author of the Fourth Gospel to have been—borrowed the word Logos from Philo.[2] Very possibly he did, at least

[1] John i. 18 (*vide* the original).

[2] De Pressensé, however, with regard not to the *word* Logos but to the *idea*, well says, "On ne saurait concevoir une opposition plus tranchée que celle qui existe entre cette doctrine [St. John's, with

ultimately. The writers of the New Testament did not try to form a language of their own, as some philosophers have done. They used the ordinary language of the time, though occasionally raising such words as ἀγάπη from vulgar use to express what literary Greek had no expression for, "the poesy of Christian," of Divine "love." Just in the same way they adopted the word Θεός, though it had been applied to the heathen deities and thereby degraded, to express "God." But, even were it possible (as it is *not*) to prove that Philo, or Plato, or any one else had had exactly the same idea of all that *Logos* in the Fourth Gospel expresses that St. John had, the fact would not be in the least altered that Christ, and Christ alone, was the incarnation of all that the term denoted, that He was, and He alone was, the manifestation of God, the Logos become flesh. Before His time, it is true, men in various lands, and in different ways, had expressed in religions and philosophies their conviction that some such manifestation of God was imperatively needed. They had even, in some cases, supposed that some being might or must somewhere exist, who was the manifestation of God, and who alone could reveal to men the unknown

reference to the *Logos*] et celle de Philon. Tandis que Jean admet une harmonie essentielle et véritable entre la nature humaine et la Divinité, le philosophe d'Alexandrie declare nettement qu'il est impossible à l'homme de s'approcher de Dieu" ("Trois Premiers Siècles." tome ii., p. 336). It has been suggested, with some probability, that possibly some Ephesian heretics used the term Logos, having borrowed it from Philo, and that St. John here adopted it to meet error by revealing the truth that underlay it. But of course this is a mere theory, though a possible one.

God, whom they so sorely needed to know. But all the more clearly on this account do we perceive that, not in word only but in deed, not in theory but in fact, Jesus affirmed the truth of such God-breathed preconceptions, and in Himself answered the innate longings of humanity. Men hungered for the bread of Life, and He revealed Himself as such. Those from His time to the present who have once eaten of that living Bread have never hungered again.

"Experientia docet etiam stultos." The experience of nineteen hundred years has taught the fact that Christ, and He alone of the human race, has called out all that was best in humanity, has raised the fallen, and, above all, has revealed the Father and given in love towards Himself the only and the all-sufficient and all-powerful motive-power to enable those who believe in Him—to whatever section of humanity they may belong—to live, not for self, not for the world, not even for the hope of a future reward, but for Him and for the God whom He revealed, and through Him for their fellows.

Hence the conclusion of nineteen hundred years' experience is that only through Jesus can we come to God, because only through and in Him can any of us know God, love God, serve God. The Gospel statement of this fact is merely the statement of an absolute truth, and not an arbitrary and somewhat unjust and narrow rule, as some have thought it.

Again, the course of ages has proved that in very truth Jesus of Nazareth is the Light of the World, the only true light that has ever yet been discovered. All that we know of any object in life, any hope in

death, any adequate reason for the existence of the Moral Law in our consciences, any light that we have upon the great problems of the world, upon our relation to God and our duty to our neighbour, all manifestly flows from that one source.

Let us now consider what all this means. Surely it means that His own words are true, "I and the Father are one." If only through Him can we know God and only through Him love and worship God, His deity can no longer be called in question. There is no room in our intellects, no room in our hearts, no room in the Universe, for any God who is unlike Jesus. It is only as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" that we can approach our Creator. We cannot, of course, even hope to fathom the mystery of the Divine Nature, but we can at least grasp and hold fast this one fact. In Jesus of Nazareth we *see* God Incarnate. We can conceive of no Being higher, holier, more loving, more unselfish than He is. Call Him by what name we will, it is impossible for us to worship any other being. "Christ is the one character, without the idea of whom in the mind personal piety is impossible," is the utterance, not of a Christian preacher, but of Strauss, the author of the now exploded mythical theory. If we choose to deny Christ's deity in words and call Him a mere man, though the best and most holy of men, then let us analyse our conceptions of God, if we still believe in a God, and we shall find that, if we have any worthy idea of God at all, if in any degree we fancy that we know and love Him, the Being we know and love is Jesus Christ and

none other. If Christ sits enthroned in our hearts, we find Him, and none other, on the throne of the Universe. The impossibility of knowing God except through Jesus Christ is proved by all the religions and philosophies of the world, and is admitted by Agnostics in their very choice of a name. If we reject Christ, the throne of the Universe is vacant in our eyes, and all the void infinities re-echo the desolate cry of our empty hearts for the Unknown God, who never has spoken and who never can be worthily conceived of as speaking in other accents than those of Jesus the Christ.

History teaches us this. When faith in Christ died out in France under the influence of Roman corruptions of Christianity and the writings of Voltaire and Diderot, did not the nation lose all faith in God? What faith in God still lingers in France to-day, what morality, except amid those few who still know and love Jesus? In Germany, where faith in the Jesus of the Evangelists is at a low ebb, how many other than Christians trouble themselves about God at all? Among ourselves, does not all religion vanish when a man once gives up his faith in Christ? Men have not yielded to this without a struggle. They have tried to substitute for the Christian faith what has been called Natural Religion, Deism, Theism, Spiritualism, the so-called Religion of Humanity, just as at one time in France an attempt was made to supplant Christ by the worship of the Goddess of Reason (represented by a harlot!). All has been in vain. So, too, whenever faith in Christ has died out of a nation,

with it has died all true patriotism, honesty, purity. Is not this seen not only in the French Revolution, but even in the character of many of the statesmen of a past generation in this country, whose careers have been so ably discussed by Macaulay? It is a sad but an undeniable fact that each nation and most individuals that reject their faith in Christ sink into vice—too often into the vice "which destroys kings," the vice which is depopulating France, which has begun to threaten the population of England, of America, of Australia. Rome of old, we are told, perished from lack of men. Strange and awful it seems that such vices as that which enervated the grand and intellectual Greek race and handed them over as an easy prey to Rome, the vice which is to-day depopulating every Muhammadan land, should be the goal of every nation that loses faith in God. Never in the time before Christ's coming did any system of religion long continue to exercise a restraining influence over men. Since that time we see the same thing. No living faith in God is long existent and *active* for good except where Christ is known and loved. On the other hand, wherever He reigns in men's hearts, He purifies and elevates them as individuals and as nations. Compare England under Cromwell with England under the second Charles. Witness how faith in Christ raised Holland from the dust, burst the Spanish chains, gave her freedom and might. When this faith declined the nation withered away. Faith in Christ has been proved by the experience of the ages to be the only remedy for the ills of humanity. Severed from Him,

virtues may still seem to flourish for a time in some noble characters, less tempted, perhaps, than their fellows, but only as a flower in a vase. It soon withers when severed from the parent bough which nourished it with its sap. To urge, as some do, that we may have Christian morality without Christ is to say that a flower needs no root, because for a time it remains unwithered in the vase. "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." Sooner or later the end comes. Life consists in union with Christ the Son of the living God. "And this is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Only through Him can we know the Father, for Christ is at once the proof of God's existence and the revelation of His holiness, His mercy, and His love.

CHAPTER II.

THE FACT OF CHRIST.

IT will be noticed that the argument in the preceding chapter does not rest upon any presuppositions regarding which there can be the shadow of a doubt. We have not assumed the genuineness, the authenticity, the authority, the inspiration of the Gospels, the purity of their text, the truthfulness of the events therein recorded, or any other premiss which, however well founded and capable (as we believe all these matters to be) of demonstration, may yet by some be disputed or regarded as still unproved. We have argued from one fact, and from one alone, —the fact that the Gospels exist. They are in our hands in the Greek language. They have been handed down to us, in substance as they now are, from a very early period. They contain the portraiture of the character of one called Jesus of Nazareth. We have four different Gospels, but only one Jesus. The aspect from which He is regarded in each several Gospel differs somewhat from that adopted in every other, as might naturally be expected from the different authorship of each. Yet no candid reader of these four books can for a moment doubt that the different aspects are of

one and the same object. It is impossible to say—it has never been said—that the writers are describing different persons. The attempts which have been made, for example by Renan, to prove that the character described in the Fourth Gospel is incompatible with that portrayed in the other three have confessedly failed.[1] From these four Gospels the world has received the portraiture of a Man. Certain words and acts of His are therein related, whether correctly or otherwise; but taken all together they represent a character at least as clearly drawn as is the character of any other man whose biography has ever been written. Xenophon gives us one delineation of his master Socrates, Plato another; yet we see that the two are but slightly different aspects of one and the same man. Where they vary, the cause of the variation is evidently to be sought in the difference in the constitution of the writers' minds, in the varying limitations of their conception of their master. As there were not two different teachers each bearing the name Socrates, so there is only one Jesus of the Evangelists. This is an indisputable fact, and all that we have urged in our first chapter rests upon this fact, and upon this alone,—that we do find in the Gospels the portraiture of one very remarkable character—that of Jesus of Nazareth, who is called the Christ.

Whether He ever really existed, or, if He did, whether the authors of the Gospels have truly

[1] See De Pressensé's "Les Trois Premiers Siècles," and Principal Tulloch's "The Christ of the Gospels and the Christ of Modern Criticism."

depicted Him or not, it was not necessary for the purpose of our first chapter to inquire. All that we have hitherto said holds true whether the portraiture drawn in the Gospels be purely ideal, purely imaginary, or not. Real or unreal, it represents to us the highest ideal of the Divine which the human mind has ever been able to conceive. It is quite possible *a priori* to suppose, though utterly impossible to prove, that the authors of that portraiture have idealised and elevated a really existent but purely human and "natural" person beyond the facts of the case. Of course it is also possible to suppose, what all analogy would lead us to believe, that, on the contrary, Jesus of Nazareth, whom the Evangelists' own writings show to have so far surpassed them in everything, may have been so far superior to them that these writers have been quite unable to do Him anything like justice. It requires a philosopher in any adequate degree to understand a philosopher, a poet to fitly comprehend a poet. Even then we cannot be sure that any man has ever fully understood all the excellencies of another, especially of one so far above him as Jesus, on their own showing, was superior to the Evangelists. But, making all due allowance for such suppositions as these, the fact remains that Jesus, as drawn for us in the Gospels, is, and has been ever since those books were written, the highest ideal of humanity, and that His character presents to us the highest conception of God which men have ever been able to form. If there be a God at all, He must be like the character of Jesus as drawn by the Evangelists; and, however far that

character may fall short of depicting to the full the character of the Infinite God, yet we cannot in our present state apprehend God more worthily, or form more noble and fuller conceptions of Him than are contained in the Gospel portraiture of Him who claimed to be the Word made flesh, one with the Father, whom whosoever has seen has thereby beheld the Father.

This is true, be it again observed, whether the Gospel writers are romancers or not, whether such a character as they have depicted in Jesus of Nazareth ever really trod this earth or not. If we believe that the Jesus Christ of the Gospels never really existed, we are, of course, deprived of One whom we must love, of One whose love has been the motive-power of all that has ever since that time been the best in the history of the human race. But still we cannot deny that God, if there be a God, must in character resemble their description of Jesus; that if God wished to reveal Himself He could do it in no more adequate manner, if He desired to elevate men's characters, ennoble their lives and win their hearts, than by assuming such a character and so moving among us. "The story of His (Christ's) life," it has well been[1] said, "will always remain the one record in which the moral perfection of Man stands revealed in its root and its unity, the hidden spring made palpably manifest by which the whole machine is moved." "Nor even now," says John Stuart Mill,[2] "would it be easy, even for an

[1] "Ecce Homo," p. 302.

[2] J. S. Mill, "Essay on Religion," p. 253.

unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete than to endeavour so to live as that Christ would approve our life." This witness is true. Its truth will become still more clearly evident if we compare the low moral tone of the Buddha, of Socrates, and even of David, with that which we have learnt from Christ.

But it will be well for us now to inquire whether Jesus of Nazareth ever existed at all or not; and, if He did, whether His character at all corresponded with the Gospel portraiture of Him.

As for His real existence, we can hardly long remain in doubt. The great Solar Myth theory, once so popular in certain circles, and made as much use of by a certain class of unbelievers as an extinct school of philologists made of the *digamma*, in season and out of season, has almost passed into oblivion. Sénart made out Buddha to be a Solar Myth, but his actual birthplace has now been discovered. That of Jesus of Nazareth, in spite of Renan, has never been in doubt. It cannot be necessary here to quote the testimony of Tacitus, of Suetonius, the more doubtful one of Josephus, and that afforded by the books of the Jews, His enemies, to the fact of Jesus' real existence. By the universal agreement of all, believers and unbelievers alike, there is no room for doubt that Jesus lived, preached, went about doing good, gathered followers, died on the Cross, and founded the Christian Church.

But the question remains, Was He at all like what the Evangelists represent Him to have been? Or did

they, from their own imaginations, delineate a fancy picture of what they thought a Perfect Man, the Manifestation of God to the world, should be?

To believe that He was as they tell us may be difficult but to accept the alternative is what is absolutely contrary both to reason and experience. As the Mythical Theory advocated by Strauss and founded upon Hegelian speculation has now been abandoned even in Tübingen itself, we may leave it out of consideration. In the same way, Renan has, in the judgment of the most thoughtful scholars of the day, failed to explain the Gospel portraiture of Jesus of Nazareth in accordance with the materialistic system of thought which underlies the clever fiction which he has entitled the "Life of Jesus." There remains only the alternative: either the picture drawn in the Gospels is a real delineation of the character of Jesus, or it is a marvellously successful romance, having for its object the ideal representation of the Perfect Man. If the latter theory can be disproved, then we can no longer refuse to accept the only alternative, and believe that Jesus of Nazareth was what the writers of the Gospels represent Him to have been. We proceed to test what we may fitly term the Romance Theory of the Gospel portraiture of Christ.

We are now in a position to know what men's highest ideals of human character, apart from the canonical Gospels, have been, and are thus enabled to judge whether the theory is in any degree tenable. All the existent literatures of the world, ancient and modern, are in our hands, and in them we find

attempt after attempt to represent the ideally perfect man. In the first Book of the Rāmāyaṇa, for example, we may read the description of the most perfect, purely imaginary character, both Divine and human, which the poets and romancers of ancient India could draw. It is not too much to say that the description of Rāma there given does not bear comparison with the Jesus of the Evangelists. Its defects and imperfections are most obvious. None would venture to institute a comparison between the licentious Kṛishna, the other great hero of Indian legend, and the Christ. Again, we have the Buddha of Indian romance as depicted in the Buddha-carita and the Lalita Vistara. It required the poetic genius of Sir Edwin Arnold, by a most effective use of a poet's license in imagination and suppression, and with the aid of colours borrowed from the Evangelists' palettes, to make such an imaginary portraiture of the great pessimistic Agnostic of ancient India as would be acceptable to the Western world. In the real Buddha, as well as in the ideal one, we find a total ignoring of God. This alone forms an awful contrast with the Jesus of the Gospels, and it alone would absolutely prevent this imaginary portraiture from accomplishing what is, after all, the greatest task the Evangelists have successfully performed, that of revealing through their delineation of Jesus of Nazareth the nature of God. The Iliad and Odyssey represent to us in Achilles, Agamemnon and Ulysses, the most ancient Greek ideals of humanity. The Prometheus of Æschylus is a later attempt, and in some respects more perfect, but it

fades before the Gospel portraiture of Jesus. Plato's highest conception of the ideal man is given us in his account of his master, Socrates. In the "pius Æneas" of the Æneid, Virgil has depicted the perfect man as imagined by the Roman mind. Even the average schoolboy of our time is too wise to share in the Roman admiration for him. We know what the Stoic and the Epicurean conceptions of the perfect man were. Is there one of all these which a really learned and thoughtful unbeliever of our day would for one moment bring into serious comparison with the Jesus of the Evangelists? The old Teutonic ideal we may perhaps find in the Siegfried of the Nibelungenlied, and that of the ancient Kelts in the legendary Arthur of romance, though, owing to their late date, it is difficult to judge how much these portraitures have borrowed from Christian sources. There is here, again, no comparison possible with the Gospel portrait of Christ.

But even since the Gospels were written we have had attempts made to depict in romance the ideal man. The writers have had the great model, and what they regarded as the model, before them in the Gospels, and, often with the very highest motives, they have endeavoured to draw their ideal characters as like that of Jesus as possible. Among these perhaps may be reckoned the Jesus of the Apocryphal Gospels. It has been well pointed out that here we have the real product of that mythical tendency to which Strauss wished to ascribe the Gospel portraiture of Jesus.[1] No two characters could be more

[1] Prebendary Row, "Jesus of the Evangelists."

essentially different. The Jesus of the Apocryphal Gospels is devoid of every single one of the high and noble attributes which the Jesus of the Evangelists possesses, and which so marvellously distinguish His character from all others. It is absolutely clear that the same process which produced the legendary hero of the Apocryphal Gospels could not possibly have originated the character depicted in the genuine canonical Gospels. And as the former was the mythical process, it follows that the latter was not.[1]

Two other attempts have been made, with very little success, to draw the character of the perfect man, but in such a way as to render the portraiture thus drawn the successful rival of that of Christ. One of these is the now almost forgotten "Life of Apollonius of Tyana," with which Paley has dealt more carefully than it deserves. The other is the mythical account of Muḥammad which is found in Muslim tradition. In utter defiance of the facts of history, the traditionalists have, consciously or unconsciously, tried to depict Muḥammad in such a manner that men might perceive in him an embodiment of all the highest attributes of humanity. They boast that in him were found the chastity of Joseph, the patience of Job, the meekness of Jesus, the eloquence of Moses; in a word, all the excellencies of all the prophets. They had, or might have had, the Gospel as their model. Their design was to depict in Muḥammad God's highest ideal of what a man could be, and thus to prove that, being far superior to

[1] Prebendary Row, "Jesus of the Evangelists."

Jesus, he was fitly called to be the last and greatest of God's messengers. Who is there among us who will seriously venture to compare their idealised Muḥammad with the Gospel portraiture of Christ?

Let us turn to the greatest creations of the dramatists of modern times. We have Shakespeare in England, Corneille and Racine in France, Goethe and Schiller in Germany, Ibsen in Scandinavia, Pushkin in Russia. These men stand forth as the greatest masters of their art in modern times. Their task was not unlike that which the theory we are considering ascribes to the Evangelists. Which of them has succeeded so well? Which of them does not suffer from the comparison?

Again, we have not only great poets like Milton, but a considerable number of great and eloquent prose writers, who, with the Gospels as their authority. have endeavoured to relate to us the life of Christ, Has any such work, whatever its merits, taken for any one of us the place of the plain, unvarnished narrative of the Gospels?

How and why is it that, as an acknowledged fact, all these writers of whatever race or nation have fallen so very far short of the evangelists in this matter? Whoever the latter may have been, they were not men of great learning. Not one of them, as is evident on a perusal of their works, was a literary man at all. They were not philosophers, they were not poets, they were not great writers. The very language which they used was not classical Greek. On internal evidence we should conclude that only one or two of them at most can possibly

have been writing in their native language. They were, therefore, very heavily handicapped indeed. Hardly any great secular writer has won distinction. and perhaps not one has come to the very front rank, in writing in any but his native tongue. But the Evangelists have, if the theory be correct, contended successfully with all the greatest writers of the world, meeting them on their own ground, and have produced a romance which, in the universal judgment of the whole civilised world, has utterly eclipsed all others in abiding interest and sustained charm. This is what we are asked to believe as the only alternative to accepting the Gospels as simple records of historical facts. But the difficulty of their task is not done full justice to by stating it thus. Other writers have for the most part undertaken merely to draw pictures of a perfect man. The Evangelists did more: they endeavoured to represent the Perfect Man showing Himself such under the most trying circumstances, but they had to perform their task in such a manner that every recorded word and deed of this character should be in perfect keeping with the claim which they represent Him as making to be One with God and the one Manifestation of God. Still more, they have actually succeeded in doing all this so successfully that the conception of God thus formed in their minds has become the only one possible to even the highest minds in all lands, even at the beginning of the twentieth century after the birth of Christ. Moreover, they, without any model to guide them, had to make their romance so real that it would be

accepted as true for many ages, and would be acknowledged, even by those who disbelieved it, to be the lifelike delineation of "the one character, without the idea of whom in the mind personal piety is impossible." Can any imaginable degree of credulity accept such a theory as this? Yet, if the character of the Jesus of the Evangelists be not strictly true and real, this is what the Evangelists did.

The style of the Gospels in the originals as we have them is not elaborately polished, but simple almost to rudeness. It may be said that, as in the case of the "Pilgrim's Progress," this forms one of the chief charms of the books. However this may be, the fact that we have mentioned shows clearly that not one of the four Evangelists, whoever they may have been, was a learned man of great and original genius, such a man as might reasonably be expected not only to equal but far to surpass all the ablest writers of the world before or since in depicting an imaginary perfect character. The task of so idealising any merely human Jesus, and, above all, a condemned and executed "malefactor" as He was supposed to be, in such a degree as to make Him into the Jesus of the Evangelists, was one which, it is not too much to say, demanded a genius greater than that of Shakespeare, greater than that of Milton, Dante, Homer, Virgil, or any other known writer of ancient or modern times. *One* such man would deserve to be the wonder of the whole world. In the writers of the four Gospels we have *four* such men, if we are to accept the hypothesis that these writers were drawing on their imaginations. Is not

such a supposition too absurd for even the most credulous of the incredulous to believe? If, however, we reject it, then we have no choice but to accept the only possible alternative, and conclude that the Evangelists drew from life the portraiture which they have given us. The words of one of their number must therefore be true when he says, "That which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of life, . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also." [1] No other supposition is at all possible.

In order to understand this we are not forced to study the manuscript authorities for the Greek text of the Gospels. Recent careful and diligent study may fairly be said to have given us a far better and more reliable Greek text of the four Gospels than we have of any classical writer whatever. But our argument does not depend upon any mere verbal or textual criticism, however correct. An appeal to this would be of value to the scholar only. Our line of argument is one which is based upon the simple reading of the Gospels in their natural sense. Hence the most ordinary man who has reason and a fair education can judge of its force for himself. It is an argument which has never been answered, and can never be refuted as long as we have a single copy of the Gospels in our hands.

Two conclusions follow from this. One — the most important by far—is that in the Gospels we find the portraiture, not of an imaginary or of an

[1] 1 John i. 1-3.

idealised, but of a *real* person. Jesus of Nazareth did exist, and was *at least* as great, as good, as noble, as loving, as tenderhearted, as holy, as the Evangelists have depicted Him. How much *better* He was than even they could find words to express we shall never know on earth. The fact that we have at least four witnesses to His life and words and works, four probably independent witnesses to the events recorded, adds if possible still more to the certainty of this conclusion. Should it ultimately be proved that earlier writings underlie any or all of the Gospels, that will not shake but strengthen our argument.[1]

The second conclusion which follows from what has been said above is, that we have in the Gospels contemporary records of the events which they record—that is to say, works composed during the lifetime of those who had seen and known Jesus Christ. St. Matthew's Gospel and St. John's Gospel must be the works of disciples of Christ. St. Luke must, as he himself tells us,[2] have set down just what he had heard from the lips of those who had seen, and known, and loved the Master. The old account of the origin of St. Mark's Gospel, related to us by Papias,[3] who was born in the first century,

[1] The Epistles of the Apostles give us fragmentary portraitures of Jesus, which, as far as they go, coincide perfectly with those given in the Gospels. This fact adds very much to the force of the argument here used. (See the next page.)

[2] Luke i. 1–4.

[3] Quoted by Eusebius, "Hist. Ecc.," iii. 39. It runs as follows:—"Μάρκος μέν, ἑρμηνευτὴς Πέτρου γενόμενος, ὅσα ἐμνημόνευσεν ἀκριβῶς ἔγραψεν. Οὐ μέντοι τάξει τὰ ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἢ λεχθέντα ἢ πραχθέντα. Οὔτε γὰρ ἤκουσε τοῦ Κυρίου, οὔτε παρηκολούθησεν αὐτῷ, ὕστερον δὲ ὡς

is that Mark was the "interpreter of Peter," and that he wrote down accurately what the latter related from memory. Hence the Second Gospel is practically in very large measure from the lips of Peter himself, if we accept the evidence of a writer who lived in the times of the Apostles, and had the best means of ascertaining the correctness of the fact. We do not now dwell upon all that vast mass of evidence in support of the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels which is supplied by ancient writers, and which immensely surpasses in amount, as all scholars are aware, all that can be adduced in proof of the genuineness of even the best authenticated of the masterpieces of classical antiquity. Nor do we really need to refer to the invaluable and unanswerable internal evidence which the Gospels afford in support of their authenticity; or, again, to the testimony which the other books of the New Testament bear to the truth of the facts and of the portraiture of Christ contained in the Gospels. Our argument holds true even without such proofs. None but "eyewitnesses of His majesty" could have so portrayed the Jesus of the Evangelists, even were they in genius and in every other qualification very far indeed superior to Shakespeare, Milton, or Homer.

Nor is this all. In writing the Gospels and in preaching Christ in the world, the Evangelists were

ἔφην Πέτρῳ ὃς πρὸς τὰς χρείας ἐποιεῖτο τὰς διδασκαλίας, ἀλλ' οὐχ ὥσπερ σύνταξιν τῶν Κυριακῶν ποιούμενος λόγων. Ὥς τε οὐδὲν ἥμαρτεν Μάρκος, οὕτως ἕνια γράψας ὡς ἀπεμνημόνησεν. Ἑνὸς γὰρ ἐποιήσατο πρόνοιαν, τοῦ μηδὲν, ὧν ἤκουσεν, παραλιπεῖν, ἢ ψεύσασθαί τι ἐν αὐτοῖς."

running counter to the most cherished beliefs and ideas alike of the Hebrew and of the Gentile world. They were abjuring all, or at least almost all, of what they had been taught from childhood, whether we suppose them to have originally been Jews or Gentiles, pagans or philosophers. They were certain to be denounced as blasphemers, as atheists, as credulous fools, or as crafty and designing impostors. They were exposing themselves to persecution and to imminent danger of a malefactor's death similar to that which their Master (even on Tacitus' evidence) had died. The death-fires of Christian martyrs which lit Nero's gardens by night were hardly likely to encourage them deliberately to throw away their lives and all that makes life dear, their hopes here *and hereafter*, for what they must have known to be a most blasphemous tissue of lies if it were not God's own truth. On no possible supposition, human nature being what it is, can it be rendered even in the remotest degree probable that Jesus of Nazareth did not exist, or that He was not all that the Evangelists represent Him to have been. He may have been much more; He cannot possibly have been less.

Again, we have another test in the very words ascribed to Jesus in the Gospels. It is not too much to say that they have as a whole no parallel in literature. We are not now concerned with the truth of the doctrines He taught, with the life He led, with the death He died. No one who candidly reads the Gospels can fancy that the speeches attributed to Christ were but inventions of the writers, still less can he believe them to have been

produced by a "fortuitous conglomeration" of myths. They agree far too closely with the other parts of Christ's portraiture in the Gospels to be dispensed with, unless we wish to mar the whole picture. Nor has any one ever lived who could *forge* such words—words which still ring in our ears to-day as none others ever have or ever can. All that we have said above regarding the impossibility of imagining the Jesus of the Evangelists to be a a mere ideal and untrue portraiture applies to this matter at least as much as to any other. It *might* presumedly be possible to doubt that He really did the works[1] attributed to Him, but none but the most credulous could, after thoroughly weighing them, believe that the *words* attributed to Jesus of Nazareth were invented and falsely put into His mouth by the authors of the Gospels. Christ's words are one of the most important parts of the revelation of His character. One who could invent them could invent that character, which we have already seen to be a superhuman task. Moreover, we have in some of the Apocryphal Gospels examples of the kind of speeches which forgers, even with "the best intentions," would, *did*, put into Jesus' mouth. No greater contrast can well be imagined than exists between the spirit and

[1] We shall deal with Christ's wonderful works in some measure in a later chapter. Here, however, we must add that if the words are separated from the works, many of them will be absolutely meaningless, or else untrue. The words again and again assert the occurrence of the works, and appeal to the latter as a proof of the claims made, and the teaching given by Christ's words and His works admirably harmonise with one another, and imply one another, as the reader of the Gospels will clearly see.

character expressed in these and the character revealed in the words of Christ preserved for us in the four genuine Gospels, and yet the former were expressly modelled on the latter.

In the East the shopkeeper and the money-changer still test coins by their ring. If the coin does not ring true, there is evidently a flaw in it, or it is not of the right metal. No one will accept such a coin; it is unmistakably a fraud. In just the same way, if we are "able money-changers"—that is to say if we are true and genuine men ourselves,—we shall find that there is an unmistakable ring of truth about a speech or a book that is true, and that comes from an upright heart. Remembering this, let any honest man take, for example, the last great prayer of Christ before His Passion, contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, and read it carefully aloud to himself. Does it ring true or not? Is it possible to imagine that the speaker was a visionary and self-deluded enthusiast, or a blaspheming impostor, or that the writer of the Gospel falsely attributed these wonderful words to Christ? The words ring true. The truer-hearted the reader of them is himself, the more convincingly will they appeal to him as being indeed words of truth, as proving that He who spake as never man spake before or since was what He claimed to be—"the Way, the Truth, and the Life." A Persian poet has well and quaintly said—

> "The Sun has come as the proof of the Sun;
> If thou seekest the proof of Him,
> Turn not thy face from Him."

This is true of the rays of the Sun of Righteousness also. Christ's words ring true, and no honest inquirer can mistake them for other than the words of One who was what He professed to be. This one test has again and again satisfied many an earnest man perplexed with religious doubts and difficulties. It is the simplest, and yet one of the most cogent of the evidences of the truth of Christianity. Again and again, amid the trials, the sorrows, the temptations of life, I myself have had recourse to it, and the Master's words have always brought peace to my soul. Let the earnest but doubting inquirer test this matter for himself, that he may find rest in Christ. So, when, amid the apostasy of the age, we hear the Master's loving tones asking of us, as of the faithful few among His first disciples, "Will ye also go away?" we shall each for himself be able to answer with one and all of the Apostolic band, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

CHAPTER III.

IS THE CHRISTIANITY OF THE GOSPELS AN ECLECTIC SYSTEM?

IN this age of theory, when so many men are "victims of hypothesis," and when not logic nor proved facts but suppositions based too often merely on assertions reign supreme over most men's minds, many different and mutually contradictory theories have been evolved and promulgated to account for the Fact of Christ, to explain the origin of His teaching. As Renan has so signally failed to prove that He got it from the Talmud of the Jews—a work not composed till some two hundred years at least after His death—men have felt compelled to seek for its origin elsewhere, being disinclined to accept His own assertion that He spoke what He knew because He had come forth from His Father. Hence some have claimed Christ as a Buddhist, or at least have asserted that from that system of philosophy, devoid of a God as it is, that system of unutterable pessimism, misery, and despair, He evolved His religion of hope, of peace, of love to God and man. Others have denominated Him an Essene, doubtless supposing that the paucity of our knowledge regarding the real tenets

of that small sect would at least prevent the possibility of the refutation of their darling theory. Others again hold that He drew His teaching in large measure from Egypt, or (as others have thought) from Persia. According to others we may find the sources of the teachings of the Gospel in the works of Chinese, Indian, and Greek philosophers, moralists, and poets. The last-mentioned theory will be found practically to include in itself all that is really important in the other hypotheses we have mentioned. Or they may all be summed up in the theory that the Christianity of the Gospels is an eclectic system of religion. If so, the wonderful harmony that has resulted from the amalgamation of so many discords must be confessed to be startling in the extreme. We proceed to investigate the subject in order to learn what amount of truth is contained in this Eclectic Theory.

Now, it is perfectly true that we find in perhaps every ancient and in every modern system of religion and philosophy, certain scattered fragments of truth. Belief, for instance, in the Unity of God[1] must have been the original tenet which lay at the root of much

[1] I must thoroughly agree from my own researches with A. W. von Schlegel's opinion: "Je mehr ich in der alten Weltgeschichte forsche, um so mehr überzeuge ich mich, dass die gesitteten Völker von einer reinern Verehrung des höchsten Wesens ausgegangen sind; dass die magische Gewalt der Natur über die Einbildungskraft des damaligen Menschengeschlechts erst später die Vielgötterei hervorrief, und endlich in dem Volksglauben die geistigen Religionsbegriffe ganz verdunkelte, während die Weisen allein im Heiligthume das uralte Geheimniss bewahrten." (Preface to his German translation of Richard's "Egyptian Mythology," p. xvi.)

of what Max Müller has aptly termed the "Henotheism" of the India of the Vedic period. The same may be said of the religion of Ancient Egypt. Again and again in the Book of the Dead we find the title of "The One" given to different gods. Rā is styled the father, and even the creator, of gods and men. Though the ancient Persians worshipped many deities, they yet held that Ahuramazda was the one source of all good, and worship offered to any of his "good creatures" was supposed to pass on to him, the creator of all good things. The evil spirit, Añro Mainyus, is never in the Avestâ deemed a fit object of worship, being the foe of God and of all that is good in the world, as well as the author of all that is physically or morally evil. Hence in one sense it is not correct to call Zoroaster a dualist, though in another it is. That Monotheism was the original religion of the Semites everywhere is a fact that hardly requires proof, and is acknowledged by Renan. Even among the polytheistic Greeks, Zeus is "father of gods and men," very much in the same way as is Râ among the ancient Egyptians. Greek philosophy tended to recall to men's minds the belief in the Divine Unity, though the tendency to Pantheism, which again and again manifests itself in Greek philosophy (although never gaining such complete acceptance there as in Indian schools), prevented the God so thought of from being worshipped. Paul reminds the Athenian worshippers of the "Unknown God" of the words of Cleanthes and Aratos which asserted that man's relation to God was that of child to father. Still more remarkable is the statement of an ancient

Egyptian writer that Man is the "second" or "image" of God. Minucius Felix, Tertullian,[1] Lactantius, and many other early Christian Apologists, again and again appeal to the many expressions used by the heathen of their times as a proof that the soul of Man was "naturally Christian." In pointing to the fact that belief in the Unity of God lay at the base of idolatrous and polytheistic faiths we are calling attention to no new discovery, but to what was known and asserted in very early Christian times.

The Resurrection and the life after death with its judgment, rewards, and punishments, were believed in by Persians and Egyptians alike. These doctrines are found in the Avestâ and in the Book of the Dead. But the way in which they are mentioned is very instructive. They are referred to in ancient hymns, not as new doctrines which people ought to believe, but as facts which all knew and had always known. The same may be said of the occurrence of these doctrines, especially in hymns addressed to Merodach, among the Babylonians and the still more ancient Accadians. We know how the Greeks from the earliest times believed in an after-life, in the

[1] "Quae (anima) licet carcere corporis pressa, licet institutionibus pravis circumscripta, licet libidinibus ac concupiscentiis evigorata, licet falsis diis exancillata, quum tamen resipiscit, ut ex crapula, ut ex somno, ut ex aliqua valetudine, et sanitatem suam patitur, Deum nominat, hoc solo nomine, quia proprio Dei Veri. 'Deus magnus,' 'Deus bonus,' et 'Quod Deus dederit,' omnium vox est. Iudicem quoque contestatur illum, 'Deus videt,' et 'Deo commendo,' et 'Deus mihi reddet.' O testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ! Denique, pronuntians haec, non ad Capitolium, sed ad cælum, respicit. Novit enim sedem Dei vivi: ab illo et inde descendit." (Tertullian, "Lib. Apologet.," cap. 17). This is only one example out of many.

judgment of the dead by Minos, Rhadamanthus and Æacus[1] (to whom Socrates added the name of Triptolemus),[2] and in the happy abodes of the just in Elysian Fields. They may have learnt this last tenet from the Egyptians, who speak in much the same way of a homestead in "Sekhetu Àaru" for the justified.[3] But belief in an after-life is proved by De Quatrefages to have always existed among every nation of men, savage and civilised. The Hindūs believed in the abode of Yama, the way to which all their fathers had trod, as we learn from the Rig-Veda. Our own ancestors believed not only in a life of reward or punishment after death, but in the final triumph of good and the eternal happiness of the righteous.[4] Other examples of the same kind will occur to every man of learning.

With regard to ethics also we have very much the same phænomenon. Something remotely similar to the Golden Rule of Christ may be found in Confucius, in Thales, in Aristotle. From among almost all ancient nations may be gathered evidence to prove that many of the Laws of the Decalogue were in different forms widely recognised as binding upon men. As examples of these we may mention some of the Ten Moral Precepts of the Buddhists and the Negative Confession of the Egyptians.[5] We might quote many other instances to the same effect, all showing the existence

[1] Cf. Plato's "Gorgias," capp. 79–82 [523, A—527, B]. See also "Minos," 319, *sqq.*

[2] "Apol." 41, A.

[3] "Book of the Dead," *passim.*

[4] "*Vǫluspà*,' 61–66.

[5] Papyrus of Nebseni (Brit. Mus., No. 9900, sheet 30).

of a moral law written in men's hearts. Even Cicero[1] knew that such a law existed. Many sins have always been condemned by the conscience, and even by the judgment of all men everywhere. But, for the most part, they nevertheless continued to commit those sins. In this respect Ovid's confession is of very general application—

> "Video meliora proboque,
> Deteriora sequor."

Again we find certain Messianic prophecies, which were ultimately fulfilled in Christ, not only in the Old Testament but to a less degree in many other ancient literatures also. The Avestâ tells of a prophet who would ultimately be born of Zoroaster's seed, and whose mission in the world would be to overthrow evil and falsehood. Virgil's fourth Eclogue is an evidence of the existence of a similar tradition among the Italians of old. Something of the same kind is doubtless implied in the Buddhist's expectation of the coming of "Metteyo Buddho," the Buddha of kindness. The return of King Arthur may have been really looked for by the ancient Kelts. The old Scandinavians certainly believed that the wicked spirit Loki had slain "Balldr the beautiful, the brave," but that he would some day return. The resemblance between this and the Gospel account of Christ's death and the promise of His return did much to induce the Scandinavians to embrace Christianity. The *avatāras* of India bear some distorted resemblance to the doctrine of the Incarnation.

[1] "De Republica," lib. iii., quoted by Lactantius, "De Div Instt.," lib. vi. 8.

The story of Isis and Osiris, as related by Plutarch, and in some measure confirmed by the Book of the Dead, has been compared with the narrative of Christ's death and resurrection.

Are we, then, in a position to assume that Jesus of Nazareth formed and taught an eclectic system of religion, fitting together in a wonderful manner doctrines extracted from all these, and perhaps many more, systems of religion and of philosophy, including books that were not written for hundreds of years after His death? If not, how are we to account for such resemblances to the Gospel teaching, such adumbrations of His doctrines, as are indisputably found in so many different quarters? The facts upon which the Eclectic Theory is based are certain, and have long been recognised, just as were those upon which rested the Ptolemaic theory in astronomy. The only question which remains is, Does the Eclectic Theory account for the facts of the case in a satisfactory manner, or must we seek for some better theory that will?

Such an Eclectic Theory, in the first place, gives no explanation whatever of the origin of all these doctrines of the heathen. It must assume that they are meaningless, a senseless collection of anile fables, though their agreement with one another in so many important particulars must be confessed to be very remarkable. Perhaps some wise man will learnedly endeavour to trace their resemblances and their differences to certain mysterious influences of wind and sunshine, scenery and climate, the grandeur of a mountain landscape in one instance, and the sublime

effect of the rolling ocean in another. Why not be candid at once and ascribe their origin to the benignant influences of Luna? The full moon, we know, is credited with producing very remarkable effects upon brains of a certain order, and we have the high authority of Carlyle himself for asserting the immense preponderance among the population of the world of that very class of intellect!

But, in all seriousness, it is necessary to the establishment of a theory that it should account for *all* the known facts of the case. If it does not, the theory is thereby disproved. At one time the Ptolemaic theory was accepted, because it seemed to explain all the facts of astronomy then generally known. When, however, new facts were discovered of which it could offer no fitting explanation, it had to yield to the discoveries of Galileo and his successors, and to give place to a truer theory of the universe. So with our Eclectic Theory. Surely all these lingering and long-cherished beliefs had some deep meaning: and it is neither philosophical nor scientific to dismiss them with contempt, but rather to endeavour to solve the problem which they present to us. We do not speak here so much of the moral law widely recognised by different nations, but rather of such "fables" as those to which allusion has already been made.

Again, it is a necessary premiss to any such Eclectic Theory that Jesus of Nazareth was a mere man of His time. But to lend any colour to the theory, it must be supposed that he was at once very deeply learned, very wise, very clever, very devout, and very unscrupulous. None of the most learned

and able men of that time, or of any succeeding period in the world's history until perhaps the present, had learning enough to be able to accomplish such a task as that which the theory assumes that Jesus achieved. It is very doubtful whether, even now, with all our knowledge of the religions of the world, any one of us could weave out of them such a system as the Christian faith taught in the Gospels is, presuming such a man had never read the New Testament. At least, we see no sign of any attempt to form such an eclectic religion to supersede the Christian. But, granted that it would be possible now, it was certainly impossible for any man to do it then. There was no means even for a learned man to obtain the requisite information. He would require to consult not only the religious books of the Hindūs, Persians, and Egyptians, but even the philosophical works of the Buddhists and the Chinese. He would have to possess a thorough knowledge of Greek, Latin, Teutonic, Keltic, and Scandinavian mythology, besides mastering all the philosophies of Greece. Moreover, it would be necessary to have a keener insight into the hidden meanings and truths underlying all these systems than the most learned among ourselves have as yet attained to. Men had previously tried, if we may believe tradition, to learn the hidden wisdom of Egypt, of India, of Persia, jealously guarded in each case by a priesthood most unwilling to initiate foreigners, or indeed any one not belonging to their own order or caste, into the mysteries of their various systems. Solon and Pythagoras had, we are told, visited Egypt with such an object, and

Plato is credited with even more extensive travels. Herodotus had certainly journeyed in the East with a lively and reverent curiosity about all such matters. Judging from such of their oral or written teaching as has been preserved, what did they succeed in learning of the religious systems and philosophies of the East? Megasthenes certainly resided for some time in India, but he failed to penetrate into the mind, the thoughts, the theories, the beliefs of its peoples. The information which the classical writers give us regarding the religions of the nations known to them is scanty and often extremely erroneous, as we are now fully aware. An instance of this is afforded by the account which Tacitus gives of the religion and worship of the Jews. The Greeks and Romans did not tell us any more about Oriental religions and philosophies, evidently because they knew no more. Bêrôssos, the Chaldæan priest, did indeed write a book in Greek to explain something of the myths current among the Babylonians. What remains of it is not without interest; but no one could from such accounts learn any one single great truth. These and the Phœnician fables, of which some knowledge was attainable in those times in a similar way, were grotesque and horrible in the extreme. It is the same, to a certain extent, with those of the Hindūs and Egyptians, as we now know. Nor was the Greek and Roman mythology, or that of Asia Minor, at all of a lofty or elevating character. Plato's opinion of the mythologists of Greece is clearly evident from his banishing them from his ideal Republic, lest they should corrupt men's morals by

their unseemly tales of the gods and goddesses. How was it possible for any one out of all this mass of fable to extract a single grain of truth, much less the truths of the Gospel? Now that we have the New Testament, we can, in the light which it gives, perceive feeble guesses at truth hidden in these systems, but without the Gospel that would not even now be possible.

The Jews did not study the religions of the heathen, and we know that the stricter religionists of the time forbade parents even to permit their sons to learn Greek. Jesus was by birth and education a Jew, and His enemies were surprised at His knowledge of even the Jewish Scriptures, because, they said, He had "never learnt," that is, never sat at the feet of any of the great teachers of the day. He was not, as it were, a "University man" at all, much less a man of such wonderful learning as the Eclectic Theory must ascribe to Him. We do not know for certain that He even spoke Greek. Certain it is that, whenever His "ipsissima verba" are quoted, they are not in Greek but in the Palestinian Syriac of His day.

Until our own time there has never been a science of comparative religion, even if there is now anything worthy of the name. The task of founding such a science was too difficult to be performed by the most learned man of Christ's time. With all the advantages of the present day, it has taken the writer of these pages very many years to learn what little he now knows of mythologies and philosophies. Jesus had none of these advantages—printed books, grammars,

dictionaries, facilities for travel and study, leisure, and encouragement in the work. He was poor; He belonged to a small and despised nation. His rank was lowly; He lived only some thirty-three years; He worked as a village carpenter. We are therefore forced to conclude that the task which proved an impossible one to the most learned men of His time could not have been less impossible to Him, if we hold Him to have been what the supporters of such a theory must believe that He was.

Were any one in those days desirous to form an eclectic religion which should appeal to the highest instincts of humanity, how could he have set about such a work? To what authority could he appeal in support of his choice of selections from the various religions and philosophies which, we shall suppose, he had studied? How was he to distinguish the true from the false? The fragments of truth which exist in the religions and philosophies of the heathen world are so inextricably bound up with the most inane and often revolting fables, that it is no easy undertaking to separate them. A good instance of this is afforded by the story of Isis and her brother, Osiris, as related by Plutarch. There are pathetic incidents in the story, but the details are not very lovely. Even an infinitely easier task than that which the theory supposes, the work of combining the religious beliefs of his own nation into one harmonious whole, was never accomplished by the most learned sage of Egypt. The same may be said of the wise men of Greece, of Rome, and of India. Whenever a philosopher arose in any of these lands, and, evolving a

few philosophical tenets, formed a system of doctrine for himself and his disciples, he and they could hold it only as probable, they could not know it to be absolutely true. Every succeeding philosophy differed from its predecessor in the most vital matters. To form an eclectic system at all is difficult. To convince one's self of its truth is still more difficult; to convince other men more difficult still. But to evolve from previous religions and philosophies such a religion as that of the Gospel, to believe in it oneself, and to lead one's disciples to believe in it so firmly as to live and die for it, was a superhuman task, and one which a merely human Jesus could not possibly have accomplished.

The moral difficulties involved in the theory, however, are far greater than any which we have as yet considered. On the Eclectic Theory, Christ had not merely to evolve the conception of God as the Heavenly Father, which conception Renan deems the most original part of all His teaching, but He had also to *live* so as to manifest God's fatherly love. He had to live in accordance with the Golden Rule, and not merely to formulate it. If we suppose that he learnt the idea from Plato that the perfectly good man would be crucified, and that from the Egyptian mythology in general and the tale of Isis and Osiris in particular He borrowed the doctrine of the resurrection of the Saviour of men, how did He combine the two in this way? For Osiris, according to the myth, was not crucified but torn limb from limb, and Plato's good man did not rise from the dead. But in order to prove the doctrine, He not only announced

that He would Himself die on the cross and rise again the third day, but actually *did* so die and rise again, if we may believe the Gospels. As far as His death by crucifixion is concerned, heathen testimony removes all doubt about it. If He did not foretell His own resurrection, then the Evangelists have borne false witness in this matter, and His eclectic system is shorn of a very important doctrine. If He did promise to rise and did not do so, human credulity could hardly go so far as to lead His disciples any longer to believe in His teaching. He had so lived that He had actually deceived His disciples into believing His repeated statements that what (according to the Eclectic Theory) He had plagiarised from many pagan systems was a Divine revelation and was, in fact, brought down by Him from Heaven. He died on the cross praying for His murderers. How could a deceiver live such a life, die such a death? What conceivable motive could one who was an impostor, and had claimed a Divine Mission in order to palm off a fraud upon His most devoted followers, possibly have in foretelling and bringing about His own crucifixion?

On the theory which we are examining, the whole system of doctrine which Jesus taught rests on falsehood and imposition. We Englishmen do not believe in "pious frauds," so that nothing would be gained by substituting this term for that which to some may seen a harsher one. On this supposition it is somewhat remarkable that the *effects* which His teaching has produced in the world *have been so*

marvellously good. Æschylus,[1] Buddha, and many other philosophers, ancient and modern, agree in holding that an evil deed is the fruitful source of evil. Experience teaches us the same. The tree is known by its fruits. Men gather not figs of thistles, as the Gospel says. Now, the good results produced by the acceptance of faith in Christ have been seen and are still visible in multitudes of noble lives and victorious deaths. Self-sacrifice, love, purity, moral courage, humility, gentleness, and all the virtues spring (and in all the ages since His appearing have sprung) from belief in Him. Our hospitals, our poor-houses, the abolition of slavery, the rescue of the drunkard, the reform of the profligate, the very existence of Christian family life, the elevation of women, justice, liberty—these and countless other blessings follow, and have always followed, the preaching and *acceptation* of the Gospel.

Some years ago in Ceylon a learned Buddhist was asked by a Christian what seemed to him to be the greatest difference between Buddhism and Christianity.[2] The Buddhist replied, "In both systems, as doubtless in all religions, there are to be found many noble sentiments and good precepts. But what seems to me to constitute *the* great difference between the two systems is, that, while we both agree that certain things are good and certain others evil, you Christians have a wonderful *power* to enable you

[1] *E.g.* Æschylus, "Agamemnon," vs. 757–760 :—

"Τὸ δυσσεβὲς γὰρ ἔργον,
μετὰ μὲν πλείονα τίκτει, σφετέρᾳ δ' εἰκότα γέννᾳ."

[2] This anecdote was related to me by the son of the questioner.

to do the good and avoid the bad; we, on the contrary, have the knowledge only, but lack the power required to render it effective." This is just what Christ told His disciples would be the case. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself except it abide in the vine, so neither can ye except ye abide in Me. . . . Without Me ye can do nothing." The Church universal to-day joins with the Church of the first centuries in that magnificent hymn of praise, "The noble army of Martyrs praise Thee."[1] As has well been said, "Over and above the Four Gospels we have another, already nineteen chapters long, and each chapter is a century, of Christian lives and Christian deaths."

Is all this the result of self-deception, of a fraud, an imposition, a blasphemous lie? Could the utmost credulity of unbelief go further than to deem it so? The theory that Jesus of Nazareth formed an eclectic system of religion, and palmed it off upon His followers as a Divine Revelation is attended with too many historical, intellectual, and moral difficulties for us to accept it as an *easy* way of escaping from the necessity of believing in Him.

Moreover, the distinctive thing about Christianity as taught by Christ was not the entire novelty of the

[1] Our "Te Deum" (which words do *not* mean "Thee, O God," but "Thee *as* God") is very probably (with the addition of but two clauses) the same hymn which Pliny mentions as sung by the Christians of Bithynia in his day. "Affirmabant autem," he says, "hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, *carmenque Christo quasi Deo* dicere secum invicem." (Pliny, Epist. X., 101.) I owe this suggestion to the late Mr. C. J. Rogers of the Punjâb.

doctrines which he inculcated. Christianity is not a mere system of dogmas, it is a *Life*. In this it differs from all previous and all more recent systems, whether of religion or of philosophy. Christ did not claim that all he taught was absolutely new. He came "not to destroy, but to fulfil." He reminded the Jews that belief in the Resurrection followed from certain words found in their own Pentateuch. From the same book he showed them the binding nature of the marriage tie, the duty of reverencing parents, the Unity of God. He claimed to be the Messiah promised to their fathers, and for whose Advent they and all the East, if we may credit Suetonius, then looked. He showed that His own Death and Resurrection were prophesied of. He referred to what seems to have been their own division of the Commandments into two, and speaks of it with approval. He might have proved from their own prophets that the Gentiles also were to be brought to know God. What was new in His verbal teaching may in the main be summed up principally in two things: the Golden Rule, and the proclamation of the Love of God as shown by sending His Son into the world for man's salvation. These at least were the chief points that then seemed entirely new. What Christ did was what none other had ever done or could ever do—to reveal the Father by His own life and character. This was done even more in deed than in word. Christ's character was the Revelation of the Father. He thus proved Himself to be the Logos, the Word of God, the Son of God. He made the Unknown God known to His disciples, potentially

known to all men. No possible system of eclecticism could do that; no imaginable collection of moral precepts and religious tenets culled from all philosophies and from all religions could advance men even one step nearer to that goal. Hence, even if the theory we are examining were proved up to the hilt, —and we have seen that it is impossible to prove the hypothesis, or even to make it seem reasonably probable—it would not in the slightest degree shake our faith in Him who not only spake as never man yet spake, but who has revealed God as none other ever did or could reveal Him.

We must now inquire in what relation to the Gospel do those various adumbrations, anticipations, or foreshadowings of certain Christian doctrines, which we find in earlier religions and philosophies, stand. The answer which the Bible gives seems to be satisfactory. It tells us that man was originally made in God's image, and received instruction direct from his Creator. It also informs us that, though man fell, yet God never left Himself without a witness in men's hearts, that the true Light (Christ) "lighteth every man coming into the world," that God willed that all men should "feel after Him and find Him." We are assured that men were early given the promise of the coming Seed of the Woman, who should bruise the Serpent's head. As a fact of Anthropology we know that man has always had a religion. The early prehistoric races who inhabited these islands before the arrival of the Kelts have left us a proof of this, as far as they were concerned, in their cromlechs, in the very methods of burying their

dead which they adopted, and in the ruins of Stonehenge. The fact has been so completely proved by modern research that we need not further discuss it here. "All men naturally thirst for the gods," says the aged Nestor's son in Homer. We also find that all religions, even the Christian, have a tendency to degenerate and to become corrupt, while History proves that none but Christianity has any recuperative power. The farther back we go, the nearer to its source we trace any religious system, the purer we find the stream. Compare the worship of Varuṇa in the Rig-Veda with the rites and creeds of modern Hindūism. Compare mediæval and modern Romanism with the Christianity of the Gospels. The law is seemingly of universal application, as we might expect from the analogy of all human things. In opposition to fact and the teaching of history in this matter, we have only such theories as those of Animism and Fetishism. History shows us these as the *last* stage of the corruption of religion in the last days of Roman and Greek Heathenism, in the breast of a Nero, in the mind of many an unbeliever of the present day. All known facts are opposed to such theories. This, of course, to many minds renders these theories indisputable, but we take leave to adopt the contrary view. We are driven by a study of the facts and by analogy to conclude that man, when fresh from his Creator's hands, had religious ideas as well as religious instincts, had, in short, a revelation suited to his religious capacity. Fragments of the truths thus revealed survived, though often in a very distorted form, in

various nations. These were enshrined in certain traditions, in tales and parables, in hymns and holy books. Messianic hopes and promises are found in a similar manner in almost all ancient literatures.

This being so, is it strange that, when the perfect and final Revelation of God came in Christ, we should be able to trace in it certain resemblances to some of these scattered and shattered fragments of Truth? Nay rather, since Truth is one, how could it be otherwise? If we found that the Christian Revelation was in every respect entirely different from all men's highest hopes and beliefs, that there were no partial anticipations of it before to be found in any quarter, that it did not answer to men's yearnings, solve their difficulties, confirm their highest hopes, that it negatived their noblest guesses at truth, would not this be a decisive proof that Christianity had not come from the God who created mankind and knew the needs and desires of their hearts? On the analogy of Nature, does it not seem probable that these desires were themselves an evidence that provision would be made to satisfy them? This Christianity has done. The highest teachings of the philosophers were but noble theories, splendid guesses, without proof, without any authority but the *ipse dixit* of a Pythagoras, of a Plato. Even Socrates could not *prove*, he could only *feel*, that there was an after-life. In the domain of Ethics Plato represents him as demonstrating that a polytheist of Athens could not logically show[1] that there was any distinction between good and bad, piety and

[1] "Euthyphron," capp. 7-9.

impiety. Men instinctively believed in an after-life, but had no real proof of it, and it seemed to them gloomy, unreal, shadowy, and vain. This is as clear from Job as from Homer, from the Rig-Veda as from the Book of the Dead, from the early Babylonian hymns as from the poems of Ossian. They hoped that God heard prayer; some few felt that God must be good. Men felt their need of a Revelation; they could not find one. They sought after God, and were only too conscious that they were unable to discover Him. All heathen religions, and still more all philosophies, are an evidence of this. Plato longed for some λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ to waft him over the ocean of uncertainty and of doubt. Men lived and loved and lost. Some, in despair, said that the best thing for a man would have been never to have been born, and the next best thing was to die as soon as possible. They erected altars to the Unknown[1] God, and thereby confessed their need of Him as well as their ignorance of Him. They had ideals which they had no power to realise, high hopes and yearnings which life seemed to mock and death to disappoint. Death whom all beings feared, Death "the mighty Ender" (as the men of ancient India called him), who yet might end nothing, not even their misery, overshadowed all. They longed for, but despaired of, an escape from his power. They cherished faint echoes of the legends of the Golden Age, when Justice ruled, and Heaven was nigh, and Gods dwelt with men. They clung to shreds of hope that it might return, that the golden apples in the gardens of the

[1] Pausanias, i. 1; Acts xvii. 23; Philostratus, vi. 3.

Hesperides might not turn out to be Dead Sea fruit after all.

In answer to their hopes and their conjectures, in fulfilment of prophecies and foreshadowings, in satisfaction of the longings of the human heart, Christ came to reveal the Father, to offer salvation from the power of sin, to promise victory even over death. He republished in a fuller and more perfect form all the truth known to their fathers and in fragments preserved by themselves, and in Himself He showed forth its reality. He "annulled [1] death, and brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel."

We see then that the unconscious prophecies of heathenism, its lingering echoes of an earlier revelation, its faint and feeble guesses at truth, were adumbrations of the Christian Revelation. They were not the ravings of madmen, but had their place in God's plan of guidance for the race. They were not meaningless, but full of a deeper meaning far than those who held them ever dreamed. They were at once the relics of the old and the anticipations of the new, at once the last feeble glimmerings of the fading twilight of the past, and the first struggling rays of the coming day. They were fragments of a shattered mirror, which no human power or ingenuity could ever gather together and repair, so much being utterly lost. Then Christ the Sun of Righteousness arose, and then only, ever so faintly, could these broken fragments in any measure reflect the light. They were like the false dawn, as it is seen in the East, which is followed for a time by blacker night

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10.

than before, ere the morning at last breaks and the shadows flee. But still they did usher in the day-dawn, and bore witness, amid the shades of night, at once to men's need of it and to its approach. Then, finally, the Dayspring from on high visited us, "to give light to them that sat in the darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace."

Because of the broken fragments of the shattered mirror which are seen faintly to reflect the sun, we are asked to reject the sun itself. We are gravely assured that the light of the sun has no real existence, that what we regard as sunlight is merely formed from them by refraction in some mysterious way. Because of the struggling gleams of the false dawn we are asked to consider the sun an impostor, though the earlier gleam itself bore witness to his existence and advent. Because of the adumbrations of truth in earlier systems, we are urged to reject the Truth when it shines in all its splendour. And all this in the name of Reason! a name in which as many crimes have been committed as in that of Liberty. It is once more proposed to set up the image of the goddess of Reason on our altars; but we find that her character is still far from perfect. Reason rooted in Unreason stands, *lucus a non lucendo*. Surely it is too late for such childishness. It is in vain to try to put back the clock of History. Christ is come a Light into the world, that whoso followeth Him may not walk in darkness, but may have the light of Life.

CHAPTER IV.

MAN.

A GREAT deal of attention has been devoted in our own day to investigations into the origin of the human race. Darwinism and the Theory of Evolution have, in one form or another, been accepted by very many. These theories and investigations are of surpassing interest and of no slight importance. But we are concerned with them at present from one point of view only. We may ask whether they are in any measure true, and, if so, how do they affect the claims of Christianity? If it be ultimately proved beyond the shadow of a doubt that man is descended from the lower animals, will that fact annul his claim to possess instincts which raise him above the brutes? Will it forbid his progress to a higher state than the present? Will it prove that he need not guard against the danger of sinking to the level of the brute? Does the supposition that the evolution theory is true forbid man to hope for immortality and an after-life? Does it do away with his obligation to obey conscience? and does it render conscience a delusion? Does it in any way explain man's instinct which leads him to feel after God and to worship Him? If so, will any possible explanation fit in

with the facts of the case, unless it be one which fully recognises that these things are important elements in humanity itself which have their part to play in our lives? If God, instead of creating man by a special exercise of His Almighty Power, as we formerly held, has chosen to produce him by the ordinary working of the so-called laws of Nature, which, after all, are *God's* laws, does this fact do away with man's duty towards God and render him no longer responsible for his actions here? To ask such questions is to answer them. Whether man is descended from the lower animals or not, he is now vastly superior to them, and this superiority in large measure consists in and is the result of his possession of these higher instincts and higher faculties. He has a conscience, he has high ideas, a capacity for being influenced by noble and unselfish motives; he has powers of self-restraint and self-sacrifice, he has a far more developed reason than the lower animals possess. Hence, however he may have attained to his present position in the world, he stands at the head of the visible creation, and is therefore bound to act in a manner worthy of his lofty station. When a boy grows up he is not excused from conducting himself as an adult should, simply because he was once a child. An infant may crawl without blame as we all did once; a child may weep on the slightest excuse or at a trivial hurt; he may show fear without shame. But we do not therefore readily excuse a man if he does these things, on the ground that once upon a time he was an infant. We rightly consider that changed circumstances require a proportionate

change of conduct and demeanour. Whether therefore the Theory of Evolution may ultimately be proved or not, it cannot alter our obligation to accept the light we now have, rightly to use our reason, to obey our conscience, to seek to know and do God's will.

The Laws[1] of Nature are but convenient expressions for the particular methods in which it has pleased God to work. Law implies a lawgiver; and a law has no power of itself to do anything: it must be carried into effect by an agent if it is to be effective. Laws against the admission of the Jesuits into England are still to be found in our statute-books, but they have no result because not put into operation. If the laws of Nature are figuratively said to have evolved man, the meaning is that man has come into existence in accordance with those laws for some definite object. "Man," says Agassiz,[2] "is the end towards which all

[1] "The expression, 'Laws of Nature,' means nothing else but the uniformities which exist among natural phænomena (or, in other words, the results of induction) when reduced to their simplest expression." (Mill, "System of Logic," bk. iii., chap. iv.)

"It must be clearly understood that Science is nothing else than man's intellectual representation of the phænomena of nature, and his conception of the order of the universe. That conception is formulated in what we term the 'Laws of Nature,' which in their primary sense are simply the expression of *phænomenal uniformities*, having no coercive power whatever. To speak of such phænomenal laws as governing phænomena is altogether unscientific, such laws being nothing else than comprehensive expressions of aggregates of particular facts." (Dr. Carpenter, "Principles of Mental Philosophy," pp. 692–3.)

[2] "It is evident that there is a manifest progress in the succession of beings on the surface of the earth. This progress consists in an increasing similarity to the living fauna, and, among the vertebrates, especially in their increasing resemblance to man. But this connexion

the animal creation has tended from the first appearance of the first Palæozoic fishes."

Again, if we consider the successive forms of life as they came into existence upon this earth, we perceive that each successive advance in type brought new and higher laws into operation. The vegetable, besides being subject to the law of gravitation like the mineral, is, unlike it, governed by the laws of nutrition and propagation. The animal, succeeding the vegetable, is bound not only by these laws but also by those which affect motion and volition. Man then comes upon the field, and immediately higher laws begin to operate upon him—the law of responsibility for his actions, the laws which regulate the operation of his reason, the law of conscience, the moral law within, and others. If he transgresses these they inflict their own punishment, just as really as do the laws of nutrition and motion. One certain

is not the consequence of a direct lineage between the faunas of different ages. There is nothing like parental descent connecting them. The fishes of the Palæozoic age are in no respect the ancestors of the reptiles of the secondary age, nor does man descend from the mammals which preceded him in the Tertiary Age. The link by which they are connected is of a higher and immaterial nature; and their connexion is to be sought in the view of the Creator Himself, whose aim in forming the earth, in allowing it to undergo the successive changes which geology has pointed out, and in creating successively all the different types of animals which have passed away, was to introduce man upon the surface of our globe. Man is the end towards which all the animal creation has tended from the first appearance of the first Palæozoic fishes." (Agassiz, "Principles of Zoology," *fin.*)

Similarly, Owen says: "The recognition of an ideal exemplar for the vertebrated animals proves that the knowledge of such a being as man must have existed before man appeared. For the Divine mind which planned the Archetype also foreknew all its modifications." (Owen, "The Nature of Limbs," p. 85.)

result of the habitual transgression of the laws regulating one's station in the scheme of creation is that the process of degradation from that station begins. We see this in part of the neglected population of our great cities, and certain very degraded tribes of savages are known to have reached their present condition by the same process.

As, therefore, man has a conscience and a religious instinct, these have been given him or produced in him for some definite purpose. Their possession renders him subject to the laws of Nature which apply to such things, and which are at least as important and worthy of attention as is the law of gravitation or any other law which affects his material frame, or the laws of logic which regulate the operations of his intellect. Our conscience is at least as important a part of man's composite nature as is our reason, and both these attributes denote a purpose in their existence as clearly as do the hand, the ear, or the eye, or any other member of our physical frame. To state this is to prove it. Whether any form of the evolution theory be accepted or not, it cannot affect the correctness of this conclusion.

But we must not forget that the Theory of Evolution, as far at least as Man is concerned, is at yet only a theory and not an established fact of Science. The late Professor Virchow, some years ago, in an important address in which he summed up the progress of Anthropology during the twenty years preceding the time at which he was speaking, said that, though he believed in Darwinism, yet truth compelled him to confess that all the investigations of the

last twenty years had tended rather to disprove[1] than to prove the theory. The "missing link" has never been found, and as our knowledge of the animal world increases, the probability of its ever being discovered grows daily more remote. Bathybius has been long since exploded. Leading scientists tell us that we cannot even conceive of the living as springing from the not living.[2] All this tends to show that, if any Theory of the Evolution of Man is likely to be ultimately proved, it must be a Theistic one. Every recent discovery tends to render Wallace's Theory of Evolution more probable than that of Darwin. Wallace holds that, in order to render the Theory of Evolution possible, we must suppose that there occurred a certain number of Divine interpositions. One of these was needed to produce the living from the non-living. Another was, he holds, absolutely necessary to envolve Man from the very highest of the Anthropoid apes. Whether Man was or was not so produced is still an open question, and we seem as far

[1] Elsewhere he says: "We cannot pronounce it to be a conquest of science that man descends from the ape or from any other animal. We can only indicate it as an hypothesis, however probable it may seem. . . . . We must really acknowledge that there is a complete absence of any fossil type of a lower stage in the development of man. I am bound to declare that any positive advance which has been made in the province of pre-historic anthropology has actually removed us further from the proof of such connection—namely with the rest of the animal kingdom." (Note to p. 21 of Prof. Stokes's "The Absence of Real Opposition between Science and Revelation," published by the Victoria Institute.)

[2] "The non-living state of matter is separated from the living state by a chasm which is unfathomable, and which has not been, and which never can be, bridged even in thought." (Dr. Lionel Beale, "The New Materialism.")

as ever from being able to obtain any decisive scientific proof of it. The evidence of embryology is very much in favour of Evolution, but on the other hand the sterility of hybrids and the tendency to retrogression (reversion to type) and degeneration seem altogether to negative the theory. We must for the present leave the matter undecided, and be content to wait for further discoveries. What concerns us here is to notice that, in whatever way it may one day be settled, it cannot, if duly considered and logically dealt with, in any way affect our duty to God and to our neighbour.

We may say the same with reference to every other theory which is connected with the origin and development of Society. Some people assure us that it is an undoubted fact that Man was at first a savage of the lowest type, devoid of conscience or religion or thought of God, and that all religion arose from belief in ghosts. They forget to tell us where this belief in ghosts came from. If it existed, it indicated a belief in something not merely material, something spiritual, and the origin of this idea should most certainly be explained and the explanation clearly proved. We have already seen that all known facts are opposed to these theories of Animism and Fetishism. But we have still to consider what evidence there is for the assertion that Man was originally a savage.

Science has proved that there is only one human species, and defines species as a number of individuals who may have sprung from a single pair of ancestors. If this be so, the ancestors of the human race must have inhabited one centre from which their descendants

dispersed in different directions to populate the globe. There has been much discussion as to where this original abode of the human family was, and the most contradictory views have been expressed on the subject. With these it is not necessary for us now to deal. It may, however, be mentioned that the Avestâ[1] has preserved for us a very ancient tradition of the ancient Persian Âryans, to the effect that at the dawn of their national consciousness they were settled in Central Asia somewhere in the neighbourhood of Herât. The Indian Âryans there separated from them and descended into the Panjâb plain. The traditions of the Semites as preserved in the Legend of Gilgamesh—originally of Accadian growth, but accepted by the Semitic conquerers probably because it harmonised with their own—points to the lower part of the course of the Euphrates and Tigris as the original home of Man. Traditions are of considerable value in the absence of history; and the fact that the accounts given us by these three great divisions of the human race agree in representing them all as starting from a certain region in one particular zone of Asia ought to give it considerable weight. The narrative in Genesis at least does not conflict with this view.

Genesis represents the ancestors of our race as a single human couple, whose first attire consisted of aprons of leaves, and who next adopted the skins of beasts as their dress. They and their children then lived by agriculture and the chase. Words denoting articles employed in these pursuits, and

[1] Avestâ, Vendidâd I.

those terms which expressed family relationships *and belief in God* are part of the most ancient linguistic heritage shared by the whole Âryan family. The same fact is true with regard to the Semitic family of languages. Though, perhaps, we may consider our first parents low in the scale of civilisation, if we identify the latter with luxury or learning or advance in arts and sciences, from another point of view they were not so. It was only some generations later, according to Genesis, that their descendants invented the art of working in metal and that of forming musical instruments; yet, on the evidence of philology, we are entitled to say that, from the earliest times of their possession of a language at all, men had religious faculties and religious beliefs. "No doubt there existed in the human mind from the very beginning," says Max Müller,[1] "something, whether we call it a suspicion, an innate idea, an intuition, or a sense of the Divine. What distinguishes Man from the rest of the animal creation is that ineradicable feeling of dependence and reliance upon some higher Power, a consciousness of bondage from which the very name of 'religion' was derived." Elsewhere[2] he says, "As soon as Man becomes conscious of himself, as soon as he perceives himself as distinct from all other things and persons, he at the same moment becomes conscious of a Higher[3] Self, a higher Power, without which he feels that neither he nor anything else would have any life or reality. We are so

[1] "Chips from a German Workshop," i., p. 238.

[2] "Lectures on the Science of Language," vol. ii. pp. 479, *sqq*.

[3] The Professor here adopts the Hindū idea of the *Paramātmā*.

fashioned—and it is no merit of ours—that as soon as we awake we feel on all sides our dependence on something else; and all nations join in some way or other in the words of the Psalmist, 'It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves.' This is the first *sense* of the Godhead, the *sensus numinis* as it has been well called; for it is a *sensus*—an immediate perception, not the result of reasoning or generalising, but an intuition as irresistible as the impressions of our senses. . . . This *sensus numinis*, or, as we may call it in more homely language, *faith*, is the source of all religion; it is that without which no religion, whether true or false, is possible." Instead, therefore, of being at first destitute of all religious ideas, Man must have been endowed with them at the very beginning, and they must have played a far more important part in his life than they do now with the great majority of men in civilised lands. "The fact is not," says Professor[1] Grau, "as one might suppose, that Religion obtained greater and wider significance in the progress of the development of the civilisation of the nations, while in the earliest times it was of less importance. On the contrary, the most ancient details which literature has preserved for us regarding the life of nations are either of directly religious purport, or at least they make us recognise of what innermost importance belief in God was in the childhood of humanity. It is necessary merely to refer to the fact that the most ancient recollections of nations are nothing else than mythology—that is to say, all the thoughts and feelings of the human race

[1] "Ursprünge und Ziele unserer Kulturentwickelung," pp. 6, 7.

when in its youth were full of religion." "History[1] expressly contradicts the modern view, according to which the development of humanity progressed wholly from below upwards, from the animal to the human. It is true that we see the nations advance from the simple to the compound, from the undeveloped to the developed. From children they became men. But that which afterwards in the course of history manifested its nobleness and its wealth of ideals entered upon its development also with such talents as these. Our ancestors took with them not merely an objective, but also a subjective heritage of ideal conceptions of the gods; they possessed piety, probity, chastity, patriotism, and other virtues."

However few luxuries he may have had therefore, Man from the very beginning of his existence as Man upon the earth possessed a religion. As he received this from God, it follows that, however simple and childlike it may have been, it was true. This is what all history and all the traditions and the earliest written documents of the human race teach us. The Golden Age of which Greek and Roman writers tell us was one in which the gods lived in harmony with men. The early traditions of the Scandinavians show that they too believed that man originally stood in a closer relationship with the gods of Ásgardh than he did in later times. But we do not need to depend entirely upon these invaluable traditions. We possess certain written documents which take us back to very early ages. Writing in Egypt and in Babylonia must have been in existence at least

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 106.

four thousand years before the Christian era. How early some parts of the Book of the Dead and some of the Accadian poems were composed we are quite unable to say; but they are probably, in part at least, far more ancient than the art of writing. Religious ideas in them meet us in a very fully developed state, and during the course of ages had become very much corrupted from their ancient purity. If the famous geologist, Sir J. W. Dawson, is right in concluding on geological evidence that man probably[1] came into existence between six thousand and eight thousand years ago, we are thus brought very near to the time of man's first appearance on the earth.

With regard to the question whether Man was originally a savage, facts seem very decidedly opposed to the theory. Dr. Grau[2] says, "So far as history enables to look back, we find neither among Hamites nor Semites nor Indo-Germans conditions of savagery or of a simple 'state of Nature.'" M. Renan[3] writes thus: "No branch of the Indo-European or Semitic races has descended to the savage state. These two races everywhere present themselves to us with a certain degree of civilisation. Elsewhere *one has not*

[1] "There is no adequate geological reason for attributing the so-called Neolithic men to any time older than that of the early Eastern Empires, or say two thousand or three thousand years before Christ, and that the time required for the Palæolithic men need not be more than twenty or thirty centuries additional. What evidence the future may bring forth I do not know, but that available at present points to the appearance of man, with all his powers and properties, in the Post-glacial Age of Geology, and not more than from six thousand to eight thousand years ago" ("Fossil Men," 2nd ed., p. 246.).

[2] "Ursprünge," p. 78.

[3] "Histoire Générale des Langues Sémitiques," vol. i., p. 495.

a single example of a savage people which has raised itself to civilisation. We must then suppose that the civilised races have not passed through the savage state, but have from the beginning borne in themselves the germ of future progress. Was not their language in itself a sign of nobility, and as it were a primitive philosophy? To imagine a savage race speaking a Semitic or Indo-European tongue is a self-contradictory fiction, to which every person who has become initiated into the laws of Comparative Philology and the general theory of the human intellect will refuse to lend himself." On the evidence of pre-historic Anthropology Sir J. W. Dawson goes[1] still further. "The man of Cro-Magnon and his contemporaries are eloquent of one great truth, in which they coincide with the Americans, and with the primitive men of all the early ages. They tell us that primitive man had the same high cerebral organisation which he possesses now, and, we may infer, the same intellectual and moral nature, fitting him for communion with God and headship over the lower world. They indicate also, like the mound-builders who preceded the North-American Indian, that man's earlier state was the best, that he had been a good and noble creature *before* he became a savage. It is not conceivable that their high development of brain and mind could have spontaneously engrafted itself on a more brutal and savage life. These gifts must be remnants of a noble organisation degraded by moral evil. They thus justify the tradition of a Golden and Edenic Age, and mutely protest

[1] "Fossil Man," 2nd ed., pp. 202, 203.

against the philosophy of progressive development as applied to man, while they bear witness of the identity, in all important characters, of the oldest pre-historic men with that variety of our species which is at the present day at once the most widely extended and the most primitive in its manners and usages, the great Turanian or Tartar race of northern Asia and America."

What M. Renan says about the fact that History does not present us with a single instance in which any one single savage tribe has by its own unaided efforts raised itself to a state of civilisation is well worthy of attentive consideration. Wherever we find an instance of civilisation having in historical times been developed in any nation, we learn that it was directly due to the influence of some other more advanced community with which the former had been brought into contact. Those who are so fond of assuring us, not only of the immutability of the laws of Nature, but also that the changes which have occurred in man's condition are due to the gradual and long continued operation of the same causes that are now at work, should give this matter due weight. Another fact has also been observed which bears on the same question. It has been found that the savage state is so *detrimental* to the human species that, when any tribe has fallen below a certain level, it is impossible to raise them, and there is a decided tendency for the tribe to die out altogether. If the savage state were man's natural and original condition, we should not expect to find this so.

The matter is still *sub iudice*, and there we leave

it. All recent investigations seem to support the line of argument which we have adopted. In any case we are quite safe in concluding that it can never be proved that Man has been *fortuitously* evolved, or that Conscience and the Religious Instinct of humanity do not *exist*. As they exist they are definite and very important *facts*, which must be taken into account in any adequate theory of the world and of the human race.

As these qualities or attributes exist in Man, as we have religious instincts and capacities for ideal conceptions which tend to raise us higher in the scale of humanity, as our natural longing for a knowledge of God and for an after-life, and our intuitive belief therein have an existence, they must be parts of some great and comprehensive plan. That plan must involve progress and not retrogression. To stand still is impossible. It must be God's purpose to improve the human race, to recover it from the Fall,[1] to render it worthy of its great capabilities and its great opportunities, to satisfy its innate longings after better things. As to the need of improvement, as far at least as the greater part of the human race is concerned, there can be no doubt. The state of the world to-day, the existence of sin, degradation, sorrow, suffering, misery as we see them all around, has again and again been urged as an indictment against the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. Yet experience, in reference to material things especially, has shown that nothing is destroyed or wasted in the Universe, as we know it. Therefore analogy leads to

[1] *See* Chapter VI.

the conviction that what is true in the material must be true in the spiritual world. Hence it follows that Man's highest hopes, his belief in the difference between right and wrong, his yearnings for the knowledge of God, his efforts for his own amelioration and that of the race, his struggles after purity, his love of the highest manifestation of God that the world has ever seen, his sufferings for what he believes to be the truth, his high ideals of honour, justice, and equity, his desire to follow in the footsteps of Jesus and to be made like unto Him, his longings to serve and glorify God to all eternity, are not and cannot be in vain. They must all form part of God's "eternal purpose," they must have been given to us or evolved in us in order to produce some good result. Otherwise Reason and Conscience and all the teaching afforded us by the analogies of the Universe and the Laws of Nature, by our instincts and intuitions, by all that is best and highest in us, must be one hideous deception, a stupendous Lie, and Evil and Malice must sit on the Throne of the Universe. Against such a conclusion the whole of Nature with one voice protests.

We have seen that all History and all the researches into Anthropology which have ever been instituted show that, from the earliest times of which we have any knowledge, Man has possessed religious instincts and religious beliefs. Religion is that which distinguishes Man from the lower animals. We have seen that, wherever we find Fetishism and Animism actually existent at any time in history, ancient or modern, they are known to be due to the corruption

and degradation of more ancient, loftier, and more worthy conceptions of the Divine. For examples of a contrary tendency, in which a higher form of religion has historically developed itself out of Animism, we look in vain in the actual world, and must turn to the world of imagination and hypothesis. This is in itself a sufficient refutation of the theory that all religion sprang from a belief in ghosts. A theory which does not rest upon a large number of actually observed facts is so absolutely unscientific that it requires no serious refutation. But if for the moment we grant the correctness of this unproved, or rather disproved, hypothesis, it does not at all seriously affect our argument. Whether religious ideas were thus actually developed by a gradual process, or whether they formed part of Man's original constitution and heritage as a Man, they now exist and have existed in a highly developed form ever since the dawn of history at any rate. They are facts which require to be reckoned with, facts which have a meaning and a purpose, facts which have already played a by no means unimportant part, and which have yet a part to play, in the history of the race. We are responsible to God and to our fellow-men for the use which we make of these endowments. Nothing can justify us in sinking back into the condition of more or less intellectual animals, as those are in danger of doing who leave God out of their thoughts and consider all ideas of religion and even of morality as mischievous delusions, or at least unmeaning fancies.

As has already been pointed out, it is a proved

fact of Anthropology that Man in all ages has not only believed in the existence of a God or gods, but has also been convinced that there is an after-life. Not even the lowest savages with whom we are acquainted have entirely lost these beliefs. We have considered the meaning of the former of these two convictions, we must now proceed to deal with the latter. Is there any foundation for believing in the after-life?

Aristotle tells us that, when any belief is received and has always been received by all nations, it is a law of human nature and must be true. From the time of that philosopher up to the present, no argument has been adduced of sufficient cogency to lead us to reject this conclusion. But if we do, we have still to account for the origin and perpetuation of the belief in an after-life. This could hardly be founded on the personal experience of survivors. At first sight it might seem as if, on the contrary, all the experience of all the ages were directly opposed to this belief. Hence we find the Accadians speaking of "Mad Nu-ga-a," "the land of the No-Return." Sophocles represents Ajax as saying of himself—

> "Ἐγὼ δ' ὁ τλάμων . . .
> κακὰν ἐλπίδ' ἔχων
> ἔτι μέ ποτ' ἀνύσειν
> τὸν ἀπότροπον ἀΐδηλον Ἅιδαν."
>
> *Ajax*, lines 600–608.

And Shakespeare's expression is well known—

> "The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
> No traveller returns."
>
> *Hamlet*, Act III., sc. i.

Never has the silence of the grave been broken, as far as we have any evidence on the subject, unless we accept the statements of the Bible with reference to a very few instances. The most important of all these we shall consider later.[1] But even granting these exceptions to the rule, it cannot be pretended that these events gave rise to a belief which existed everywhere ages before them, and continues to exist to-day among men who have never heard or read the Bible at all. Yet not only has a belief in the after-life arisen, but it has lasted on in spite of almost universal experience which seemed to contradict it, in spite of the not unnatural desire which has arisen in some minds to shake themselves free from a conviction which in them inspires terror. Here, as in so many other matters, the great poets of our race have been true to nature in their delineations of character. The guilty Œdipus in Sophocles, though his fear and horror at the thought of seeing his injured father and mother in the next world are so deep and real that they impel him to put out his own eyes that he may enter it blind, is not represented as denying the existence of the future state. Such a denial would have convinced no one, not even the criminal himself. Nor is it in poetry only that we find such things; the actual world has afforded far too many instances of men who had nothing to hope for and much to fear in the after-world, and who yet failed to convince themselves that there was no future state. Belief in the existence of an after-life may degenerate into the doctrine of the transmigration of

[1] *See* Chapter V.

souls, as it has done in India and not unfrequently elsewhere too. It has occasionally assumed the form of the supposition that life in the next world may not be eternal; yet, even thus modified (as it was among the natives of New Zealand regarding all spirits of the departed except those of chiefs and other great men), the belief in an after-life continues to be held. Buddha, holding that the extinction, firstly of the desire to live and of all other desires, and ultimately of existence itself, was the noblest aim of the highest human and divine wisdom, was yet unable to convince himself that for the great mass of men death ends all. Belief in an after-existence, however it may have arisen, has become part and parcel of our very nature as human beings, and must be dealt with accordingly. If any one has *really* (and not only in word) succeeded in obliterating from his mind all, even the very faintest, belief in (or, it may be, dread of) this existence in the next world, he must be either more or less than a man. Such exceptions, if there be such,[1] may be said to prove the rule. They no more disprove it than a maimed or blind individual does the rule that man has, or should have, the normal number of limbs and the sense of sight.

On any form of the Evolution Theory, except that held by Christian Evolutionists, it is difficult to account for the origin and persistence of the innate

[1] Even Professor Huxley was not an exception, for in a letter to Mr. Morley he wrote, "It flashes across me at all sorts of times, with a sort of horror, that in 1900 I shall probably know no more of what is going on than I did in 1800. I had sooner be in hell a good deal" ("Life," vol. ii., p. 62).

and strictly *intuitive* belief in an after-life. Whether it be true or false, it must be intended to serve *some* purpose in the world. The moral difficulty of reckoning any innate idea as a delusion, as an act of wilful deception of His creatures on the part of the Creator, is too great to render it necessary for us seriously to consider this as a possible alternative. We are therefore led to conclude that this intuition is a correct one, that is to say, to deduce from it the fact that man does live after death. Into the nature and object of that higher existence, with the boundless possibilities of growth and improvement, mental, moral and spiritual, of progress, of activity which it affords, it is not now our design to enter. Suffice it to say that the after-life cannot be *intended* for retrogression, even if (as this present life does) it affords opportunities for it.

Although nothing observable in Nature outside ourselves is of sufficient force to *produce* in our minds this conviction of an after-life, as is clear from the vain efforts which so many philosophers in every age and in every land have made to find evidence, apart from Revelation, sufficient to prove to demonstration that there is a future life, yet, when we have once attained to belief in it in whatever manner, the analogies of Nature and the very constitution of our minds afford great and valuable support to that belief. The double existence of the caterpillar and even of some of the humbler forms of animal life, the rising and setting of the sun, and many other similar phænomena, have in all ages appeared to men as types which prefigured some new existence for themselves

also. The fact that nothing, not even matter, perishes, though its form may change, the evidence of the Conservation of Energy, and other discoveries of our own time, seem to afford us additional confirmation of the correctness of our belief. Men have in all ages felt what Goethe says, "Everything fleeting is only a type,"[1] a symbol of the unchanging, the everlasting. "The things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." The Visible Universe came into existence as such in time, and in time may pass away; but, if it does, it will but return to the Invisible from which it sprang and there abide eternally. Man feels that this visible body, with its limitations, its weaknesses, its necessities, is not his noblest part. He knows that the consequences of his acts, good or bad, continue at least long after his death. A man's thoughts live long after his heart has ceased to beat, long after his brain has been resolved into its chemical constituents. Love is stronger than death,[2] affection in the heart of the survivor lives long after the grave has closed over all that was mortal of the beloved, and the dear name lingers even on dying lips with the sure hope of a meeting in a happier world, where death and

[1] "Alles vergängliche Ist nur ein Gleichniss" (*Faust*, pt. ii., *fin.*).

[2] *Cf.* Schiller's "Hektors Abschied." There, in parting from Andromache to go to his death, the hero says—

> "All mein Sehnen will ich, all mein Denken
> In des Lethe stillen Strom versenken,
> Aber meine Liebe nicht!
> Horch! der Wilde tobt schon an den Mauern,
> Gürte mir das Schwert um, lass das Trauern!
> Hektors Liebe stirbt im Lethe nicht!"

parting, tears and pain, cannot come. The intellect may sometimes grow feebler with years, memory may fail in part, but years have no power to dull the clearness of the eye of Conscience, and the aged Christian's last thought is of his Redeemer, whom he hopes soon to see face to face.

These things are facts, and as such must not be left out of account. What do they mean? Whence has come this longing for and belief in the after-life? Is it an illusion, a deception? Analogy again comes to the aid of reason and of our innate sense of justice to give us a reply. In the world around us we see much of God's working, and His handiwork testifies to the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. The eye needs the light, and is in itself a testimony to the existence of the latter. If in a fossil of the Palæozoic period we find evidence of the existence of any kind of an eye, we are absolutely certain that light existed and shone on the earth at the period when the creature lived. The ear testifies to the existence of such a thing as sound, the fish's fin to water in which it can swim, the wing of the bird to the circumambient air. Of these correspondencies in Nature we know that, if they do not always presuppose one another, at least the lower, so to speak, is a sign and pledge of the higher. If the eye existed, but not light, the ear, but no medium which could convey sound, would not the Creator have broken the promise which the very existence of such organs implies? On the theory that these and similar organs were evolved as they were needed, the argument becomes still stronger. Well then, what

corresponds to the hope, the need of immortality, of a life beyond the grave? If the Creator has caused us to hunger for material food, He has abundantly provided means of satisfying our hunger, and we can perceive the purpose which appetite is intended to subserve. If we thirst, the means of quenching thirst exist in abundance. To give the impulse without also supplying the means of gratifying it, would be not only unwise but cruel. Is the thirst of the soul of less importance or more ignoble than that of the body? Is the latter to be satisfied and no provision made for the former? Why then should this spiritual thirst have been brought into existence in our hearts at all? Our souls are athirst for God, the living God, as Homer joins with David in testifying: has God created the nobler thirst and not provided the water of life in the knowledge of Himself? Man hungers for another life, which experience shows to be needed for the fuller development of his powers, for the fuller exercise of the love, the unselfishness, the self-control, the devotion which he has, or should have, learnt here on earth,—and for which he has been trained in the school of life, by its joys as well as by its sorrows, by his struggles, his sufferings, and his victories, nay, even by his failures and disappointments. Has the hunger been so universally given and the bread denied? To believe this is to arraign not only God's goodness but His wisdom, nay, even His truthfulness. For the analogy by which He has been teaching and leading us here, with regard to other matters, induces us to trust *every* pledge which He has given us by the system of *correspondencies* which

He has established, and which He has given us intellect to observe and understand. "If the gods do aught evil," says Euripides,[1] "they are not gods." Let God be true, though every man be a liar. He has not created our highest hopes to dash them ruthlessly to the ground: He has not given us our noblest longings to deceive our minds and torture our hearts.

Whatever, therefore, Man may once have been, whatever his origin or his future destiny, we may be assured that his intuitions and his conscience do not deceive him.

> "He thinks he was not made to die;
> And Thou hast made him: Thou art just."

We may well conclude with the poet that—

"All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall exist;
Not its semblance but itself; no beauty, nor good, nor power
Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the melodist,
When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.
The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;
Enough that He heard it once: we shall hear it by and by.

"And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonised?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?
Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom He whispers in the ear;
The rest may reason and welcome; 'tis we musicians hear."

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[1] Εἰ θεοί τι δρῶσιν αἰσχρόν, οὐκ εἰσὶν θεοί (Frag. "Belleroph.," 300).

CHAPTER V.

THE SUPERNATURAL IN REVELATION.

THE word "Supernatural," like almost all other technical and, perhaps, all scientific terms, is open to objection.[1] Strictly speaking, there can be nothing supernatural, as there is only one Universe and one system of Nature known to us. In the same way there can be no past and no future, only an eternal present. But we have to use current terms if we would be understood. It is true that, in order to know exactly what should be called supernatural, it would be necessary for us to know the exact limits

[1] For example, as the word *science* means *knowledge*, the term is liable to objection when applied to any Science except Mathematics. We know that in this and every possible Universe, in all past and future eternity, two and two make four. But we do not in the same sense *know* that the Law of Gravitation does and must ever hold true in connexion with every particle of matter in the Universe, and in every possible Universe. Again, Scientists still use the terms *sunrise* and *sunset*, for want of better and more convenient ones, though they can hardly be said to deem them exactly correct. So in other matters also. The word "King" properly denotes a man who *knows how to do*, and *can do*, whereas it is generally applied to one whose duty it is not to take any part in politics, and who *cannot* do legally many things that most of his subjects may. The word "Queen" corresponds exactly in derivation and original meaning to *γυνή*, but it is now used to convey a different idea. All human language is inexact, but we still use it for want of a better means of communicating—or, as a French cynic says, of concealing—our thoughts.

of the natural. But without pretending to do that, it is convenient to employ the term to denote what differs from or is beyond the ordinary operations of Nature as known to us from experience, what exceeds what we know of the limits of human power or knowledge, and what therefore seems to us to imply the interposition of a higher Power.

Those who deny the existence of the supernatural in this sense must surely be trifling with words. They cannot really mean in plain English to assert that what they call the Laws of Nature are personified to them, or that Nature is intelligent and personal. They cannot really believe that everything in the Universe has sprung into being from the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, as Democritus or Lucretius held—making their atoms hooked, endowing them with a downward and slightly centripetal motion, and with volition. All that is out of date, whether we denominate the smallest imaginary particles of matter atoms or molecules or vortices, or adopt some other name for them. It was said of a celebrated and eloquent statesman, lately deceased, that words had a great mastery over him. They seem to have a great mastery over many men, since we too often find that many people appear to imagine that when they have invented a name for a thing, whether "animal magnetism," or "atom," or "protoplasm," or "natural selection," or "Evolution," or "survival of the fittest," or "Nature," they have thereby explained everything—or even *anything* at all.

Recent research may fairly be asserted to have shown that, besides Matter, there also exists in the

Universe something most clearly distinguished from Matter by the fact that we cannot even mentally predicate of it any single one of the necessary attributes of Matter. We may call this Energy, or Force; or we may go further and, with many deep thinkers of our own day, conclude that all force has a spiritual origin, and recognise that Will lies behind all its manifestations. This implies the existence somewhere in the Universe of Personality, or it may be of something as much higher than Personality as the latter is superior to inanimate matter or to the vegetable world.[1] The existence of our own personality is another proof to the same effect. For surely that from which our personality is derived cannot be *less* than Personal.

Again, in all our investigations, and not least in own thoughts, we soon reach the limits of our possible progress. This is the case in the purest and most abstract mental operations as in all other departments. It is natural that this should be so, for our very being itself is finite. As has well been said, "All sciences have their ultimate facts, for which no other cause can be assigned than the will of the Creator. Of the existence of the properties of the different kinds of matter, and the determination of the conditions of their action, we can give no other account than that the Creator willed them to be so."[2] Our

[1] "Is it not just possible that there is a mode of being as much transcending Intelligence and Will as these transcend mechanical motion? It is true we are totally unable to conceive any such higher mode of being. But this is not a reason for questioning its existence." (Herbert Spencer, "First Principles," p. 108.)

[2] Dr. Carpenter, "Manual of Physics," p. 13.

puny might of body and mind fails in the contest with certain of the great forces of Nature, as manifested in the tornado, the earthquake, the volcano. We have not yet learnt to define Life, much less to trace its origin.[1] We cannot explain the growth of a blade of grass, though we can weigh the planets and approximately measure (though not conceive of) the distance of the nearest of the fixed stars. We cannot explain how Mind influences Matter, though we find it exercising such influence in every one of our actions. Who are we, therefore, that we should presume to determine that under no possible circumstances can God ever have interposed in the history of the human race, that the order of Nature, as we know it, cannot be and never has been altered, that there is, therefore, no such thing as what is commonly denoted by the term supernatural? What we know of the order of Nature is entirely based upon a very partial experience, our own or that of other men. Other men's experience is made known to us by their testimony. When we are told that it is impossible that a dead man should come to life again, the assertion rests upon the

[1] "Nothing whatever, I fear, has been added by physical science to our knowledge of the real nature of the marvellous change which occurs when a material atom passes from the non-living to the living state, and becomes an integral part of the very simplest or lowest living matter in existence. The nature of this change, which is unquestionably different in its essential nature from any known physical change, has not yet been elucidated, though it has been over and over again declared that it is physical. In spite of all the confident utterances, no one has been able to explain, in terms known to physical science, any one of the phænomena occurring during any moment of the existence of the simplest living form in nature." (Dr. Lionel Beale "The New Materialism.")

assumed fact of experience. Now, such experience may be very real, but it can be but very partial and very limited. We have never known such a case ourselves, but our own experience goes back a very short time in the history of the world. If Man has been in existence only some seven thousand years, the experience of a man of seventy among us forms but a very small fraction of that of the human race. If we accept the theory that Man has been in existence myriads of years longer, the very slight value that any single man's own experience may claim becomes correspondingly lessened. Even of what takes place in his own lifetime in the world no one man can really know very much. With regard to everything beyond the limit of his own observation, the observer is dependent upon other men's experience, that is to say, upon testimony. If we had the united and accordant testimony of all men that ever lived to the effect that a dead man had never come to life again, the mass of evidence thus placed at our disposal would indeed be very great. But would it in any way prove that a dead man *could* never under any circumstances be restored again to life? Surely not. In order to prove such a universal negative, we should most assuredly require to know exactly what life is, and that it is admitted we do not yet know. The attempt to prove that life is a kind of chemical action, that growth is practically the same thing as crystallisation, has broken down. All efforts to produce life artificially have failed; spontaneous generation has been disproved. Hence, even *if* we had "universal experience" to prove that life had

never been restored to a dead man, that would not prove the impossibility of such an event occurring. It is difficult to conceive any possible proof of such a thing. But it is a well-known fact that we have no such concurrence of testimony. In the first place we have not, strictly speaking, *all* men's testimony to their experience in the matter; we judge on the very partial experience of ourselves and those whose reported testimony coincides with our own experience. Secondly, we actually have a mass of testimony to the very contrary, to the effect, that is, that at least *one* dead man *did* return to life. The whole Christian faith is based, in the first instance, on the testimony of certain witnesses to the asserted fact of their experience that Jesus of Nazareth actually did rise again from the dead. We may accept or reject their testimony; but if we do reject it, our rejection does not alter the fact that their testimony exists, and that its very existence makes it untrue to say that the restoration of a dead man to life is "contrary to universal experience." We have to rely for most of this experience upon testimony: *all* men have not testified one way or the other; and among those who have borne witness some, and they men whose probity is not now denied by any of their leading opponents, have testified to the very fact which "universal experience" is sometimes asserted to deny. Moreover, it should be noticed that in this case it is not a question of opposing testimony, for there is absolutely no evidence given by contemporaries in contradiction to that which asserts the fact of Christ's resurrection. We all know the story

of the African chief who, on the evidence of "universal experience," his own and that of all the men of his and the neighbouring tribes and the testimony of their ancestors, absolutely refused to believe that water ever became hard. Was he a philosopher or an ignoramus? Whether the cases are strictly parallel or not, we should at least learn the danger of mistaking partial experience for universal, and basing a conclusion upon our ignorance.

To assert that God has never interposed in the history of the human race, to represent that the idea of such "interference" is contrary to what is consistent with God's majesty, dignity, wisdom, is to assert what it is absolutely impossible to prove. No one can prove a universal negative. It is most unscientific, not to say impertinent, to affirm that such interposition is inconsistent with God's attributes. Who constituted us judges of what is consistent with His dignity, with His wisdom? Such a statement, if it means anything, means simply that *in the opinion of the speaker* it is so. But others entirely disagree with this opinion, and among them are to be found many of the best, the wisest, the most learned of men. Hence it is evident that there is nothing in the supposition of God's interposition which is contrary to our reason. It has again and again been asserted that to presume the occurrence in the course of Nature of a knot which it required Divine interposition to untie is an impeachment of either God's prescience or of His power. But such logical difficulties arise from want of clearness of thought. What if God for His own good purposes arranged things

beforehand in such a manner that His interposition at some particular juncture should be required, not through any lack of power on His part, but through the limitations, the finiteness of our human nature? There is no intellectual difficulty in the matter when thus considered. God's power and wisdom are doubtless infinite, but ours are not. The teacher's instructions, however learned he may be, are limited by the capacities of the pupil, and it is no derogation from the wisdom and ability of the instructor, but rather the contrary, to presume that he does condescend to make his teaching intelligible by adapting it to the comprehension of the scholar. Most of the so-called "intellectual difficulties" in the way of accepting Christianity vanish when honestly examined. Many of those which we cannot solve at present arise, as Butler shows, from the fact that we are dealing with a scheme or plan which as yet we very imperfectly comprehend.

Turning from theory to fact, it has well been said that those who deny the possibility of the occurrence of any alteration in the order of Nature are rebuked by geological evidence of the changes which that order has already undergone. When the earth changed from the nebulous to the liquid form, from the liquid to the solid, alteration most decidedly took place. When the purely mineral world was modified by the introduction of vegetable life, new laws—new at least as far as this earth is concerned—were instantly brought into exercise. Previously they may have existed in the abstract, but they had not had any field for operation on the earth. The same

thing took place on a grander scale when the animal succeeded to the vegetable, and once more when Man came into existence and assumed the lordship of the earth, the headship of visible creation. When it is desired that humanity should rise to a higher level and approach more nearly to the Divine, does not all analogy render probable in the extreme the introduction of some hitherto unknown element into the history of the world? There is a distinct progress visible in Nature. The mineral contained promise of the vegetable, as we see in the phænomenon of crystallisation, the vegetable of the animal, the animal of the human. This is so well recognised that it forms one of the arguments in favour of the Evolution Theory. Now this progress absolutely contradicts all theories of blind Chance. Such a scheme of development evidences a Plan, a Purpose, in creation. We have already seen that in the very constitution of Man there are contained premonitions of development, implied promises of a higher state. What right have we to say that these promises are to be falsified in the event; that the evolutionary process (if we choose to call it so) is to end in Man as at present constituted? All analogy is opposed to such a theory. Even the noblest of us are not so perfect as to lead to the conclusion that in Man as he now exists the Creator has fulfilled His purpose, has reached the utmost limits of His power. It is ignorance with the assumption of knowledge that rashly presumes to deny to the Creator power to interpose, if He deems it right and wise, for the guidance and further development of the creature

He has formed, and for the more effective accomplishment of His Divine plan in creation.

This will be still more evident if we find reason to suppose that the freewill of the creature has by him been abused so as in some degree and for a time to thwart God's gracious purposes for the human race. If experience is of any value at all, it most decidedly proves our possession of freedom of will. The theory that we are automata cannot bring one single solid argument in its favour. The very fact that the automatic nerve-arc in our brain is distinct from that which affects voluntary motion disproves such a theory. The existence of moral, still more than that of physical, evil in the world is a sad and undeniable fact. We are not now concerned to account for this. All, or almost all, nations as a matter of fact to some degree explain this existence of moral evil by asserting the occurrence of a fall of some kind, and this seems to be the only possible solution of the terrible problem. That this fall should result in the permanent and final thwarting of God's purpose for the whole human race is unthinkable. But if this is not to be so, it is evident that the injury done must be repaired in some way. Whether we accept the hypothesis of a fall or not, it must be evident that moral evil, being opposed to and injurious to the conscience of Man, must exercise a detrimental effect upon his development if it be not ultimately overcome. Being opposed to what our intuitions tell us of the holiness of the Divine Nature, moral evil must have a tendency to thwart God's plan. As this cannot be finally permitted, its existence must

have been provided for in the Divine scheme, and in some way or other moral evil must be overcome and overruled for some useful purpose. We may not perhaps understand how this is possible, but of the moral and logical necessity of it there can be no doubt. Now Man has misused his freedom of will, and his nature is not in harmony with the will of a holy God. How is it to be attuned to the Divine will? The employment of violence cannot be thought of for a moment, for it would result in the destruction of the creature's freewill. But as the latter is one of the Creator's gifts to him, and part of his very nature as a man, its withdrawal or destruction would lower and not raise Man in the scale of creation, and this would thwart the Divine purpose. Nor is it possible to think of the destruction of our freewill by God, for that would be to accuse Him of having made a mistake in giving it to Man, and of having to undo part of His creation in order to obviate the awkward consequences of the blunder. Hence the only possible manner, as far as we can judge, in which the injury done by the abuse of Man's freedom of will could be repaired, would be by some plan which, while preserving our freewill, would lead us to exercise it better, to choose God's way rather than our own. Because of Man's limitations as a finite being, which condition God's dealings with him, this would seem to be impossible except through Man's attaining to the knowledge of God and of His will, and also his being sufficiently influenced by *Love* towards God to induce and enable him to wish to do God's will. This and this alone would, so far as we are in a

position to judge, bring Man's freewill into complete harmony with the will of God.

Now nothing but the Incarnation could bring this about. At least nothing else has ever in any degree done so, and we cannot even conceive of any scheme better adapted to the purpose than is the Incarnation. Whether the Incarnation really took place or not —and our first chapters show the likelihood of it— we must acknowledge that this doctrine, belief in the reality of this occurrence, has had a greater tendency in the direction indicated than anything else in the history of the world.

From all this we clearly see that there is no *a priori* difficulty in believing in the possibility of a Divine interposition, if it were needed for the benefit, for the guidance, for the deliverance of the human race. The question which now presents itself is, whether at the time of the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth such an interposition was necessary. Those who know men's yearning after God and the failure of all their efforts during age after age, generation after generation, to find Him, to discover the distinction between right and wrong, to lay hold of a pure and noble motive power strong enough to raise the fallen and support the weak, can have no doubt that it was. Consider the gloom that hung over the tomb, the "Land of No-Return,"[1] "the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself; of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness," as it seemed even to the believing Patriarch of old.[2] Remember how for

[1] The Accadian Mad Nu-Gā. [2] Job x. 21, 22.

ages the religious and moral conceptions of men had been in the process of degradation, how low were the religious ideas of even the Jews at that time, how dark was the heathen world, which had all but lost all religion worthy of the name at the time of Christ's advent, when the adoration of the ruling and most highly civilised nations of the earth was given, not even to the heavenly bodies, the sun in its might and the moon "walking in brightness," not even to the Olympic deities or those of ancient Rome, but to one of the lowest and most inhuman monsters the earth has ever borne. Knowing all this, recognising the failure of Judaism, the failure of heathenism, the failure of philosophy, the failure of atheism, how can any one fail to see that, when all else had failed, there was need for Divine interposition to prevent, as Pascal somewhere says, the human race itself from becoming extinct? If we grant that Jesus of Nazareth was what He claimed to be, then the supernatural is proved as a fact in human history. If not, we are involved in hopeless mental and moral confusion. We find that the best man that ever lived was a blasphemous impostor, who claimed to be the Truth and yet taught a religion and a morality based upon falsehood and delusion. Yet He gave men the highest idea of God that has ever yet been given, the highest which it seems possible for men ever to conceive, the very motive for self-denial and self-sacrifice which they needed, and which *has proved effectual* for the sustenance and encouragement of all in all the ages since that have believed in Him. The remedy cured the disease wherever applied, and yet it was no true

remedy! Man's thought of God is better than the reality! How can these things be? Even His opponents now acknowledge that they cannot. They will not call Jesus an impostor; they prefer to think Him self-deceived, a well-meaning enthusiast, led astray by the enthusiasm of His followers, and carried away against reason and conscience by the desire to retain their good opinion and the influence He had gained over them. Such is the picture that Renan draws for us from his vivid and poetic imagination; similar in many respects are the views now advocated by the many who deny the supernatural and yet strive still in some way to cling to faith in Christ. Such a "Christ" has not changed the world; faith in such a man could not save a single human soul. We unhesitatingly turn away from this feeble phantom of men's disordered imagination and fall at the feet of the really Historical Christ.

As a long course of preparation for man's coming into the world and clear premonitions of his advent are discoverable in Nature, we are told, long before his appearance, so analogy would lead us to anticipate that something similar would usher in the advent of the Christ, the Second Adam, the God-man. We find that this was so. We detect it, in the first place, in the preparation of the world to receive Him. The training of Israel, the Grecian and Roman conquests, the very failure of men's attempts to find the Unknown God, all prepared the way of Christ. Secondly, we find the Messianic prophecies and Messianic expectations among all nations being, especially at that very time, brought to men's minds and producing an

attitude of expectancy. When He appeared, proofs were required to enable men to recognise their Redeemer. These we find in His Character, in the first place, the beauty and divinity of which shines with brighter and clearer light on our eyes to-day than even on those of His first disciples, compelling now, as then, the homage and admiration of the noblest even among His enemies. Associated with this, however, in inseparable union, we find two other manifestations of the supernatural, His miracles and His prophecies. The first of these, Christ's character, was, and is, a proof for all time for those who have eyes to see and hearts to feel. The second was of special cogency for His own time, when, without some such evidences as that afforded by His miracles, and especially by His resurrection in fulfilment of His promises, His disciples could hardly have challenged the world to the conflict and conquered it in His name by their faithfulness even unto death. The third is of far more force in our days than in those when these prophecies were first uttered, for we can bear witness to their fulfilment in great measure.

All these things are manifestations of the supernatural in History. We have seen that we cannot deny the possibility of the supernatural—in other words, of the Divine ; we can hardly venture to deny, and cannot possibly disprove, the possibility of its manifestation. The only question is, whether there is good reason to believe that any such events as can properly be described as supernatural have ever really occurred. This is one of the most pressing questions of our day. One way or the other each of us must

find an answer to it, and it will readily be acknowledged that on the answer we give to the question will be found to hang the meaning, the issue, and the happiness of our life.

As to the supernatural character of Christ we need say little here, since we have already dealt with the subject in another form in previous chapters. He was certainly not an ordinary man, nor was He of such a class as that to which great geniuses belong. Anyone who can seriously bring himself to deny that His character manifested the supernatural, the Divine, is hardly likely to be influenced by any argument founded on reason and experience. If we grant His supernatural character, then there can be no question that God has actually interposed in the world, at least to the extent of producing that character. We are told that the Divine purpose is to reproduce that character in us; that the disciple when perfected is to be as his Master, that we are to grow up into Him in all things, until we attain to the "stature of Christ." A nobler model we could not have, a better example of what is meant by harmony between the human will and the Divine. If it be true that God's ultimate purpose is to raise humanity to anything like that standard, then we see that on the analogy of all Nature, as we know it, a Divine interposition might naturally be looked for when Christ's character had to be revealed to and in the world. If it then occurred, the question of the greater or less amount of the occurrence of the miraculous in connexion with Christ's life is a mere matter of degree. It presents no intellectual difficulties but has to be settled by experience,

which experience, like that of all other matters that are connected with the past, must be known, if at all, by evidence, by testimony. It may possibly be doubted whether we have or have not testimony sufficient to prove the occurrence of the miracles actually recorded in the four Gospels, but the way for the due consideration of such evidence as we have is cleared by the removal of supposed difficulties and of actual prejudice. Hume's most illogical argument, refuted by Archbishop Whateley so long ago, and more recently by John Stuart Mill, need no long embarrass the inquirer by its bold *petitio principii*.

It requires only a moderate acquaintance with history to perceive, as it has been perceived from very early times and clearly pointed out by Eusebius, that the whole previous history of the world, whether so intended by Providence or as the result of "chance" (whatever that term may denote), was a preparation for Christ's coming and the spread of the religion which He taught. As has already been said, the failure of all religions and philosophies throughout the whole civilised world, that is to say, throughout Europe and almost the whole of Asia, as well as the then known parts of Africa, had shown the necessity of a Divine revelation, unless man were to sink below the condition of humanity. The Greeks recognised this by the erection of altars to the unknown God or gods, as Pausanias informs us. All systems of ethics had also failed to establish themselves upon any satisfactory logical basis. None of them had been able to give men the desire or the power to rise above the basest passions of our nature. It was evident

to all thinking men that some motive power was needed which their ethical systems could not supply. The conquests of the Babylonians, the Assyrians, the Persians, had to a great extent welded the East together; and, when Xerxes failed to conquer Greece, his very failure ultimately made possible the victorious career of Alexander the Great. This gave East and West more union for a time, and a common language of commerce and diplomacy, rendering interchange of thought more easy. The translation of the Old Testament into Greek formed a theological language which was admirably fitted to express the doctrines of the Christian faith. The spread of the Roman Empire united nearly the whole known world under one head, established peace, introduced law and order, and at the same time put the finishing touch to the long process of the destruction of the heathen religions of both East and West. This prepared men's minds to some extent for the reception of the new faith, even though its purity condemned the vices to which so many had unblushingly yielded. The belief in Monotheism had become firmly rooted in the Jewish mind, in some measure from their sufferings under their heathen persecutors. Nay more, as the event proved, there were in the Jewish nation men to some degree already trained and fitted to receive and propagate the religion of Christ. Vague, perhaps, but well-known presages or predictions of a coming Saviour had spread throughout the East, as a heathen historian tells us, a general expectation that a Ruler would soon arise in Judæa and extend His dominion throughout the world. All this was a preparation for

the coming of Christ, just such as analogy would lead us to look for if He really came from God. Only those who worship a blind chance rather than the living God can assert this to have been wholly fortuitous. But such an assertion, if we examine it, either means absolutely nothing whatever, or simply denotes that the assertor confesses his inability to explain the matter at all by any hypothesis other than the Christian, and obstinately refuses to accept that.

It remains for us to consider as briefly as possible only two things: the question of the reality of the alleged miracles of Christ and of the real delivery of prophecy, regarding both as manifestations of the supernatural.

It is the custom of many persons nowadays to dismiss both questions with contempt, asserting that such things are contrary to reason. From one point of view, perhaps, this is the wisest way of dealing with awkward problems. As we cannot logically disprove the possibility of either miracles or prophecy if we in any true sense believe in a God, it is, no doubt, a token of the discretion which is proverbially the better part of valour to avoid the difficulty by loudly asserting that miracles have never occurred, that they are contrary to universal experience, and so forth. Some people appear really to imagine that vigour of denunciation of the opposite view and frequent reiteration of their own will suffice to prove what they assert. They have no other proof. So, perhaps, if they are determined to maintain their illogical position at all hazards, it is as well not to

listen to reason. It is of such men as these that Count Leo Tolstoi says, "The more difficult it becomes not to see, the more do certain persons increase their efforts to persuade us to do as they do—to shut our eyes in order not to see. In order to be quite sure of reaching our destination, they say, we must, above all, cast the compass overboard."[1]

We are frequently told that miracles are violations of the laws of Nature, and are therefore impossible. This objection is at least as old as the time of Augustine. It was answered by him, and the answer which he gives to it needs but little emendation even now. It is necessary to point out this, lest we be charged with changing our ground. "They are not so," he replies. "A miracle takes place, not contrary to Nature, but contrary to what is known of Nature."[2] No educated Christian really believes that a miracle should be defined as a violation of the laws of Nature, because he believes those laws to be the laws which God has made. We believe miracles to be Divine interpositions for a definite and sufficient purpose, and we demand sufficient evidence of that purpose before we can even consider the testimony alleged in proof of their occurrence. To say that such events are unusual is to assert what the very word miracle implies. If they were not so, they could not be regarded as in any sense indications of Divine interposition, and would lose all evidential

[1] *Cosmopolis* for March, 1896, p. 772.

[2] "Omnia portenta contra Naturam dicimus esse. . Sed non sunt. . . . Portentum fit, non contra Naturam, sed contra quam (= eam, quæ) est nota Natura." (Aug., "De Civ. Dei," lib. xxi. 8.)

value. We may not know exactly how they were effected; but a very reasonable hypothesis is that they were brought about by bringing into operation a higher law, which for a time and to a certain limited extent suspended the operation of a lower one. We see the same principle in operation whenever we toss a ball aloft in the air, or raise a book from the table. The law of human volition, in some way which we are quite unable to explain, for a time, and to a limited degree, suspends the operation of the law of gravitation as far as those material particles are concerned, and produces effects which may seem to be in violation of that law, but are not really so. But because we cannot understand how mind in this way acts upon matter and causes the higher law to operate, we are not justified, as reasonable men, in closing our eyes to facts, and in asserting, with a philosopher of olden time, the absolute impossibility of all movement.

So in other matters. "The natural sciences," says Oscar Schmidt, "have often been obliged to recognise facts in appearance incredible and contrary to all the generally accepted laws."[1] "Seriously to raise the question whether God can perform miracles would be impious if it were not absurd," says Rousseau. Professor Huxley can hardly be regarded as prejudiced in favour of Christianity, yet he agrees with us here. "It is, and always has been, a favourite tenet of mine," he says,[2] "that atheism is as absurd, logically speaking, as polytheism; and that denying

[1] "Philosophie de l'Inconscient," p. 91.

[2] *Spectator*, Feb. 10, 1866.

the possibility of miracles seems to me quite as unjustifiable as speculative atheism." John Stuart Mill, in answer to Hume, goes very fully into the question of the abstract possibility of miracles. In reply to the objection that a miracle represents that a certain effect which should under ordinary circumstances have resulted from a known cause did not result from it, he says,[1] "In the case of an alleged miracle it is asserted that the effect was defeated, not in the absence, but in consequence, of a counteracting cause, namely a direct interposition of an act and will of some Being who has power over nature; and in particular of a Being whose will, being assumed to have endowed all the causes with the power by which they produce these effects, may well be supposed able to counteract them." And again, "A miracle . . . is no contradiction to the law of cause and effect. It is a new effect, supposed to be produced by the introduction of a new cause. Of the adequacy of that cause, if present, there can be no doubt; the only antecedent improbability which can be ascribed to a miracle is the improbability that any such cause existed."

This being granted, the ground is clear for the consideration of the evidence on which the occurrence of the alleged miracle rests. Let us hear the opinion of the author of "Ecce Homo" on this subject.[2] "Miracles," he tells us, "are in themselves extremely improbable things, and cannot be admitted unless supported by a great concurrence of evidence. For

[1] "System of Logic," 8th ed., vol. ii., pp. 167, 168.
[2] "Ecce Homo," ch. ii.

some of the Evangelical miracles there is a concurrence of evidence which, when fairly considered, is very great indeed: for example, for the Resurrection, for the appearance of Christ to St. Paul, for the general fact that Christ was a miraculous healer of disease. The evidence by which these facts are supported cannot be tolerably accounted for by any hypothesis except that of their being true. And if they are once admitted, the antecedent improbability of many miracles less strongly attested is much diminished."

The evidence for the Resurrection of Christ is the strongest that can be imagined. He promised to rise again.[1] His disciples hesitated to believe that He had done so until convinced by the evidence of their own senses of sight, touch, and hearing.[2] We have in our own time seen every possible effort made to shake their evidence, to account for their undoubted conviction of the fact, on any possible ground but that of its truth; and we have perceived that these efforts have failed. So firmly were the early Christians convinced of the fact of His Resurrection that they staked their lives and their hope of salvation on it,[3] and acknowledged that not only was their faith vain if that event had not really occurred, but also that they were "false witnesses"[4] to God if Christ had not risen. In opposition to the vast mass of evidence which we have for the resurrection of Christ,—far

[1] Matt. xx. 19; Mark ix. 31; x. 34; Luke xviii. 33.

[2] Mark xvi. 11, 13, 14; Luke xxiv. 11, 20–24, 37–41; John xx. 24–29.

[3] 1 Cor. xv. 12–14, 17–19.

[4] 1 Cor. xv. 15.

excelling that which supports *any* other event in the past history of the world,—to persist in believing the assertions of those who now, entirely without proof of any kind, deny that it took place, is to manifest almost superhuman credulity. Of such an unproved and unprovable assertion we may well say, "Credat Judæus, non ego." If Christ did not really arise again from the dead, then all the undoubted good that has resulted in the world from belief in Christ has been the result of a lie. How anyone who believes in a God at all can credit this passes comprehension. Whole volumes have been written on the subject, and we must not add to their number. Every possible theory to explain away the facts has been again and again disproved. It may therefore suffice to quote the words of Professor Swete[1] in which he sums up the evidence on the subject—

"For the fact of the Resurrection there is certainly no lack of documentary evidence. Not to mention that it is assumed in almost every one of the New Testament writings, we have no fewer than five formal accounts,—six, if we may regard the appendix to St. Mark as a separate authority. Four of these witnesses are to all appearance independent,—St. Paul, St. Mark (with whom we may associate St. Matthew), St. Luke, and St. John. The evidence falls under two heads: the empty tomb, and the appearances of the Risen Lord. . . . As the appearances are summed up by St. Paul they seem to

[1] Paper read at Northampton Church Congress, October, 1902, quoted in the *Record* of Oct. 10, 1902.

compel belief. Take, for example, the manifestation to 'above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now.'[1] The Apostle could not have written thus in an open letter to a great centre like Corinth if he had not been prepared to substantiate his statements. If the epistle is genuine, as most of our critics hold it to be, within twenty-five years from the crucifixion there were still living more than 250 persons who had seen the Lord after His death at one and the same time. How is this fact to be explained on the hypothesis that He did not truly rise? Much has been said of St. Paul's use of the same verb to ascribe the pre-Ascension appearances and the appearance which was the means of his own conversion. It is argued that, since the latter was of the nature of a vision, the former must be held to belong to the same category. But the precise force of the verb ὤφθη must be determined in each case by the circumstances, and the circumstances of the pre-Ascension appearances, as reported in the Gospels, differ widely from those which attended the conversion of St. Paul. In the one case the Lord appeared from heaven: in the others He was seen in human form on earth, walking, sitting, giving Himself to be touched and handled, speaking as man to men, even eating in order to convince the Eleven that He was not a mere spirit. It may be said,[2] of course, that the Gospel narratives have suffered from accretion; that the incidents which suggest a bodily resurrection are no

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 6.

[2] But not *proved*, which is still a matter of some little importance.

part of the original story, but represent the belief of the second generation. But in the case of St. Luke, at least, the probable date of the Gospel leaves no time for extensive accretions, even if St. Luke's candour and opportunities of information would have given them admission. Yet it is in St. Luke's Gospel that these indications of a bodily resurrection are most clearly marked.

"Earlier efforts to minimise the force of the evidence have broken down, and one after another they have been abandoned by their authors, or those who succeeded to them. The modified unbelief which now holds the field contents itself with the plea that the historical evidence is at least precarious, and that, under the circumstances, it is wiser and safer to be satisfied with the vital truth that the Lord has triumphed over death and is alive for evermore.

"But the conviction that 'Jesus lives' is not the whole of the faith in our Lord's Resurrection which was committed to the Church. Whatever change may be thought to have passed over the Lord's Body, it is undoubtedly of faith that the Resurrection was not merely a spiritual victory over death, but in some true sense a bodily Resurrection. . . . On what grounds are we invited to distrust the evidence of the Gospels in this matter of the Resurrection? In the first place it is said that the accounts are incompatible: that in any case the facts cannot be fitted into a scheme. St. Matthew, with whom St. Mark must have been in substantial agreement, shifts the scene to Galilee; St. Luke detains the Apostles at Jerusalem; St. John adopts a middle course. Even

the events of the Resurrection Day do not lend themselves easily to the art of the harmonizer. In such a narrative difficulties of this kind will stagger no one who approaches it without prepossessions. They are such as might be expected in a collection of first-hand reminiscences. The excitement, the alternations of hope and fear, the hurried movements of the weeks that followed the crucifixion, are enough to account for even greater departures from historical consistency. Differences in detail suggest substantial truth: it is clear that no attempts have been made to harmonize. St. Luke, who is thought to have had St. Mark before him, goes his own way; and if the Fourth Gospel mediates to some extent, it does so in entire independence of both the earlier Gospels.

"But, admitting the fact of the appearances, it is said that they may be explained on psychological grounds. The Apostles were so possessed with the belief that the dead Master was still among them in spirit that it was natural for them to imagine that they saw His form in their midst. Such hallucinations are doubtless possible, but not under the circumstances described by all our authorities. The appearances began on the third day, and ceased after the fortieth. Can psychology explain these limits of time? They were witnessed not only by individuals, such as Mary of Magdala and St. Peter, whose imagination might easily have got the better of their judgment, but by groups of people as variously constituted and circumstanced as the Two on the way to Emmaus, the Ten, the Eleven, the Seven by the Sea of Galilee, the Five Hundred

gathered on the Galilean hills. They were seen at all hours,—in the early morning, in the broad daylight, as well as in the evening after sunset. They convinced men who not only disbelieved but ridiculed the first reports of the Resurrection. Can psychology produce any similar record of manifestations shown to be illusory? As a last resource, anthropology has been appealed to. No verdict, we are now told, can be passed upon the matter until it has been ascertained 'in what ways the human mind works under conditions like those of the first disciples.'[1] But what if the conditions were absolutely unique? What if in the whole history of the race there has been but one Man who after death has shown Himself alive by proofs such as the Gospels produce?

"The Gospel story of the Resurrection is not without its perplexities. The evidence is, perhaps, not overwhelming, and it is certainly far from being complete; in some of the details it may be inexact. But the main fact that the Lord rose again on the third day has not been shaken by any argument hitherto adduced. The intellectual difficulty of

[1] Many years ago, in Persia, a young man arose, calling himself the *Bāb*, and claiming a Divine commission, and even something of the Divine Nature. He was actually worshipped by his disciples. Being at last arrested by the Persian authorities, he was put to death. His disciples to the very end had firmly believed that he could not be killed. In this we may see something of the "similar circumstances" so much desiderated by students of anthropology. But what was the result? The religion founded by the *Bāb* continued to spread, and is spreading still. But, in spite of vivid imaginations and boundless devotion to their master, his disciples were never able to fancy that he had returned to life. There is a limit to the possibility of hallucination in such matters.

believing the Resurrection of our Lord's body to be a baseless story will always be greater than the intellectual difficulty of believing it to be a substantial fact."

If on the evidence of those who saw and conversed with Him after His resurrection we accept the indubitable fact that Christ rose from the dead, then we can have no difficulty in believing that He wrought the miracles which eye-witnesses have recorded. We are told by opponents that people in those days were very credulous, and that they had no conception of the order in Nature, and of the existence of Nature's laws. Such assertions are made not only without proof but in the very teeth of evidence to the contrary. Undoubtedly many credulous people existed then ; but such people exist still, as is demonstrated by the readiness with which many persons in our own day accept, without hesitation, as proved facts the most hasty theories invented by a scientist or a Higher Critic. But so far were men of old from being ignorant of the order in Nature that the very word *κόσμος* so often used in the New Testament denoted primarily the beauty and harmony observed in the universe, and it was used in this sense ages before the Gospels were written. Some of the earliest Patristic writings contain wonderfully beautiful descriptions of the order and regularity of the movements of the heavenly bodies, the recurrence of day and night, summer and winter. The phrase "Laws of Nature" may be modern, but without it men in Christ's time well knew that dead men did not generally come to life again, that it was not usual for a man to raise the

dead, to cleanse the leper, to open the eyes of those born blind with a touch or even with a word. The eye-witnesses who record our Lord's miracles lived and often died for their faith, sealing their testimony with their blood. The miracles they record are, perhaps, in every case admirably in harmony with Christ's character as represented to us in the Gospels. It is quite impossible to cut away the miraculous out of the narrative and leave anything like a consistent whole, as can be done with legendary miracles recorded in the lives of saints of later and far more ignorant times. Moreover, we find Christ Himself claiming miraculous power, and referring to his miracles as proofs of His Divine Mission.[1] It has been said with some truth that we do not now need to depend upon belief in His miracles for evidence of the truth of His claims. But that is not the question. We must depend upon the truth of His words which assert the fact that He wrought them. And, if we acknowledge that we have so many proofs of His truth that we do not need to rely upon His miracles, the same thing can hardly be said of His first disciples before His Resurrection. Miracles were needed then, for He had neither died nor risen again. If the stupendous miracle of His Resurrection casts all other miracles into the shade, it does not in the least on this account render their occurrence doubtful. Nay rather, it removes all difficulty we might otherwise feel in accepting them as real occurrences, and it shows how natural such deeds were for one so thoroughly human, and yet so immeasurably

[1] John vii. 21, x. 25, 32, 38; xiv. 11, 12; xv. 24; Matt. xi. 4–6.

superior to human nature, as was Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God.

We have already seen that the supernatural may be conceived of as manifesting itself in the foretelling of future events as well as in the working of miracles. It is asserted that prophecies are found in the Bible. If so, this will be a matter of great importance in proving that in that book we have a Divine Revelation. We may be also better judges of this matter than we can be of miracles, for it may turn out on examination that we are able to judge for ourselves whether any such predictions really do occur, and whether the event has coincided in any measure therewith. The task of forming an opinion is easier too, because, while some of these matters may involve a careful study of past history, others do not.

Any reader of the Bible will find that the prophetic element enters very largely into its composition. Leaving aside the great mass of these real or supposed prophecies, we select a few typical instances. We find, for example, Christ prophesying the gathering of the "eagles" round Jerusalem and the destruction of the city and even of the Temple,[1] the latter of which events (as Tacitus and Josephus lead us to believe) took place against the will of the victorious Titus. Again, we find the prediction of Peter's martyrdom.[2] The Book of Revelation contains a large number of prophecies, many of which Elliott ("Horæ Apocalypticæ") shows to have been already fulfilled. In the Old Testament we find predictions of the utter destruction of Babylon,

[1] Matt. xxiv. 1-29; Mark xiii. 1-23; Luke xxi. 5-24.
[2] John xxi. 18, 19.

Nineveh, and other great cities, the present condition of which agrees exactly with these prophecies. But, passing by all these and many more, we proceed to the consideration of a few predictions in both the Old Testament and the New which have been fulfilled in such a striking manner that we must either confess that they were inspired by a higher than any merely human wisdom and knowledge, or we must accept the irrational theory that they were but fortunate guesses or lucky coincidences. To believe this is, as we shall perceive, often far more difficult than to accept the clear evidence of the fulfilment of prophecy which is presented to us. In some cases we shall see that a man who, after all, denies the existence of fulfilled prophecy must either be wilfully ignorant of fact or blindly credulous in his acceptance of the theory of coincidences: which latter theory, however, is no real way out of the difficulty, since it merely amounts to a confession of ignorance how it has come to pass that prophecy and fulfilment so closely agree.

Let us in this matter confine ourselves to facts about which there can be no dispute. We do not require at present to enter at all fully into the questions which the date and authorship of the books to which we shall have to refer would raise. For our present purpose it will suit us quite as well to assume all that the Higher Critics or anyone else can possibly desire. It is acknowledged on all hands that the books of the Hebrew Canon of the Old Testament, whatever their date or authorship may be, existed essentially in their present form at the beginning of the Christian era, and that most of them were certainly in existence some

hundreds of years earlier, since they were translated from Hebrew into Greek about 200 or 250 years before Christ's birth. The books of the New Testament also existed before the close of the second century after Christ, and most of them at least before A.D. 100. These books, however they came into existence, contain professed predictions, many of which have in large measure been fulfilled or are in process of fulfilment at the present day. One of these is the prophecy in the last chapters of Deuteronomy, stating what the fate of the Jews would be if they fell away from God. It is related of Frederick the Great of Prussia, the friend of Voltaire, that one day he asked his chaplain to prove the truth of the Bible in two words, if he could. The answer was, "*The Jews*, your Majesty." The present state of the Jews in almost all lands, their dispersion, and the sufferings they have for so many centuries undergone, are too evident a fulfilment of this prophecy to need any comment, especially if with these facts we couple Josephus' description of the siege and destruction of Jerusalem.

Again, scattered throughout the Old Testament we have a great series of Messianic prophecies. These foretell the birth, the birthplace, the ancestry of the coming Messiah, His conduct, miracles, sufferings, and death, besides many other matters, including the fact that He would be a light to the Gentiles. Most of these prophecies were understood by the Jews to be Messianic, as we learn from their oldest Targums and commentaries. Now it is quite possible to deny (but not to disprove) the applicability of these prophecies

to Christ. But no one can honestly deny that, whatever the writers of these books of the Old Testament really meant, they have at least drawn a wonderfully accurate picture of the suffering Messiah, and that this description tallies line for line with the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, in the whole course not only of Jewish history before and since Christ's birth but of the history of the world, it is absolutely impossible to point to any *other* person whom the picture *does* suit. This latter fact the Jews themselves confess, for, having decided to reject Jesus, they do not pretend to assert that the delineation of the promised Messiah suits any one else, and hence it is that they still look for His advent. Take only one single point. Who else of Jewish or of any other race can truthfully be said to have become "a light to the Gentiles"[1] to declare God's salvation to the ends of the earth? This is true of Christ, our enemies themselves being judges: it is true of no one else. These Messianic prophecies exist still in the books received by the Jews as of Divine authority and most carefully treasured up by them. There can be no question of interpolation, there can be no doubt as to the fulfilment. How can this wonderful agreement between prediction and fulfilment, not in one or two but in a very large number of points, be accounted for except in the way in which the New Testament writers explain it, by saying "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"?[2]

Our next example we take from one single book, and that a book much controverted at the present

[1] Isa. xlii. 6; xlix 6: cf. Luke ii. 32. [2] 2 Pet. i. 21.

day. But, whatever hypothesis we may prefer to accept regarding its origin, the Book of Daniel was at least in existence in Christ's time and for some considerable time before. It was not written by Christians; and the latest date which hostile critics assign to it is prior to the establishment of the Roman Empire in Asia and the East. Now, in this book (Chapters II. and VII.) we find what purports at least to be a prophecy of four Empires which were to succeed one another on earth, and we are told that "in the days" of the fourth and last "shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, . . . and it shall stand for ever."[1] The Book of Daniel itself explains that the first of the four kingdoms was the Babylonian, the second the Persian, and the third the Macedonian. History shows us that the fourth was the Roman Empire, and this is the view taken by most of the Jewish commentators. Now, it may be said that the writer had heard of the fame of Rome and was able to foresee her future greatness without the aid of anything supernatural. But we notice that he does not merely do this, itself a remarkably strange thing to accomplish. He goes on accurately to describe the fall of the Roman Empire and to predict the rise after it, or rather during it, of a spiritual kingdom founded by God Himself, predicting that it would never be destroyed. The Jewish commentators are unanimous in explaining this of the "kingdom of the King, the Messiah."[2] We find

[1] Dan. ii. 44.

[2] *Vide* commentaries of Rashi, and Eben Ezra and the *Mĕṣōdōth Dāvid* in loco.

Christ coming during the ascendency of the Roman Empire in the East, we find Him accused of styling Himself a King, and that in reply He says, "My kingdom is not of this world."[1] He speaks of His Church continually by the title "The Kingdom of Heaven," or "The Kingdom of God," rendering it absolutely certain that, as He claimed to be the Promised Messiah, so also He asserted that He was the foundation of this spiritual kingdom spoken of in the Book of Daniel. Now there can be no doubt that He did found this spiritual kingdom, His Church, against which He promised that the gates of Hades, or destruction, should not prevail.[2] A very remarkable assertion, we must confess, for any one in His situation to make. Has the history of the world verified or falsified His prediction? Is it true that during the Roman Empire a spiritual power, claiming to be the Kingdom of Heaven, was established in God's name, and that this kingdom, identified by its Founder with what we call the Christian Church, still exists, in spite of all the efforts that ever since without intermission have been made to destroy it? This is a matter about which none of us can be in any doubt. We have the prophecy in the Book of Daniel, we find it fulfilled by Christ, and we see that the results remain—as was prophesied—until our own time.

How are we to explain all this? Again and again, in the Old Testament and in the New, even on the premisses laid down by the opponents of the faith, we find evidence of a marvellous foreknowledge of future events. We know something of the attributes of

[1] John xviii. 36. [2] Matt. xvi. 18.

humanity, and we know that accurate knowledge of the far distant future is not one of them. Such knowledge is manifested in both the New Testament and in the Old. As it cannot have had a merely human origin, it must have proceeded from some Being higher than ourselves. The Biblical writers themselves leave us no doubt as to its origin, nor is it easy to give, even theoretically, any other solution of the problem which will be consonant with Reason.

We have then in the Bible at least three superhuman or supernatural things,—the character of Christ, His Miracles (especially His Resurrection), and Prophecy. All three converge to one point to prove in the strongest manner it is possible to conceive the truth of Christ's claims. Allowing everything that the most sceptical criticism can fairly claim, and much that it has not the very shadow of a right to expect us to concede, this is the result. It cannot be denied, it cannot be explained away, it undoubtedly demands consideration from every earnest and thoughtful man. "A threefold cord is not quickly broken."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FALL, THE ATONEMENT, AND THE RESTORATION.

WHATEVER its meaning may be, it is hard to believe—nay more, it is unreasonable to suppose—that the ancient narrative of a Fall from an earlier state of happiness, innocence, and spiritual nearness to God which we find in nearly all religions is utterly meaningless. We have at least to account for the fact of the existence of this tradition, even if we have recourse to what seems the last hope of so many in our days—the propounding of a theory on the subject. Theories are not in themselves very satisfactory things, especially if unprovable, but they have their uses. It is clear that ancient traditions, which have had a sufficient vitality to secure their continued existence for hundreds and even for thousands of years, must not only be of interest to the thoughtful inquirer, but may perhaps contain some meaning and possibly an element of truth. Even the children's rhyme about "Jack and Jill," as all students of the Edda know, preserves an old Norse legend about the Moon. The similar lines,

> "Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home;
> Thy house is on fire, thy children all roam,"

preserved in Germany as well as in England, contain a reminiscence of the old Norse tradition that the Black Dwarfs from the southern Fiery Region will ultimately make a raid, cross the bridge of Bifrost or the Rainbow, and burn up earth and sky, at the time of the "Twilight of the Gods." Hence the little insect, whose name shows that, before being consecrated to the Virgin Mary, it was sacred to Frigg, wife of Odin, and was in a sense a Divine messenger, is adjured to hasten home to Ásgardh, the abode of the Gods, and give them warning. Or, to take another example: we learn from the Æneid that the Romans had a tradition, believed in firmly even in Augustus' time, that their ancestors had come from Troy. Of course a shallow school of historical criticism scoffed at such an idea, though to account for it was more difficult. Now we find that many of the names of the most ancient Roman families are of Etruscan origin, and that there must therefore be some truth in the old legends which represent the Etrurians as having played an important part in early Roman History. Philology has shown that the Etrurian language was not Âryan, but was connected with the languages of the Turko-Tartar stock. The Etrurians must therefore have come from Asia at no very distant period, historically speaking; and what more likely than that they at least passed through Asia Minor? In fact, Herodotus distinctly states (Book I., chap. 94) that the Etrurians came from Lydia, being compelled to emigrate through a great famine. The old Roman tradition may have been much coloured by Greek influence,

but we see that it preserved an element of truth. Would it not have been more scientific to recognise this in the first instance than to reject the tale as destitute of all sense and possibility?

If such is the case with childish nonsense-rhymes and local and merely national traditions, how much more likely is it that examination and inquiry will prove that there is some meaning, some truth, in traditions like the one which we are considering? The Bible account of the Fall in Genesis is reaffirmed in the New Testament, and that should lead every Christian to accept it. But we do not take our stand at all now on this. We merely refer to the undoubted fact that the account in Genesis, true or false, does not stand alone. It is supported in essence by traditions to the same effect found, as we have said, among nearly all nations. The Avestâ tells us of Jamshîd (in the older form Yima Khshaèta), with whom Ahuramazda conversed at the beginning. It speaks of the enclosure (*vara*) which Jamshîd built to protect himself and his herds from their foes. It informs us that he lost the favour of God by refusing to undertake the task which Ahuramazda wished to impose upon him, and that through thrice yielding to falsehood "the brightness departed from Jamshîd." and he fell. The Prose Edda tells us, in its quaint language, how the Gods "built a fortress" on the earth "against the hostility of the giants," [1] and within it placed the men whom they created.[2] The first business of the gods then "was to build a temple."

[1] Prose Edda, "Beguiling of Gylfi," viii.
[2] *Ibid.*, ix.

"That age is called the Golden Age, before it was corrupted by the arrival of the women:[1] these came from Iǫtunheim," the dwelling of the Giants, enemies of both Gods and men. The Greeks and Latins had their traditions of the Golden Age, ended by the revolt against Kronos or Saturn, and trace the steady descent of humanity until their sin in the Iron Age brought on Deucalion's Flood. This is not the place to attempt to refer to all such traditions, belonging as they do, under various forms, to every section of the human race. We proceed to inquire what there is in the world, in man as we know him, to throw light upon the meaning underlying such tales.

Geology has proved that physical death existed in the world long before the appearance of man upon the earth. According to the Bible, man became subject to death when he fell from communion with God by committing sin; that is to say, he fell under the dominion of the law of decease which already dominated the inferior creation. Whatever view we may take of this, one thing is certain—that the lower animals are obedient to the laws of their being, while man is not. We find in man what we do not find in them, Sin. This cannot have existed in the world as we know it before man's advent, for reason forbids us to impute sin to the brute creation, who have no conscience, no moral nature, no faculties which enable them to seek or to worship God. The phænomenon of worship is found to distinguish man everywhere and in all ages from the brutes. In ordinary human nature, as known to us from experience, there exists

[1] Prose Edda, "Beguiling of Gylfi," xiv.

moral evil, from which not even the holiest of men in this state of existence is able wholly to free himself. On the contrary, the holier a man is the more he feels conscious of his weakness, his unworthiness, his proneness to evil. This holds true even in the case of a man whose lower nature has been so far overcome that he longs to break the chain, longs for perfect harmony of heart, mind, and will, with his Creator. Though in a far inferior degree to that in which it is found among earnest Christians, yet even among the heathen this consciousness of sin exists, and has in all ages manifested itself. We find it in the traditions of the Fall already referred to, we discover it in the most ancient hymns of the Accadians and Babylonians, in those of the Rig-Veda and of the Avestâ, and in the Book of the Dead. Another evidence of this is the institution of sacrifice, which was at one time world-wide, and which is always associated with the desire to atone for sin. Hence, in a hymn still preserved to us, a Babylonian father offers his son's life to atone for his own guilt. Cæsar tells us that the object of human sacrifices among the Druids was the same. We find sacrifices, even human sacrifices, in India, in Greece, in Rome, in Palestine, at Carthage, in Mexico, in Peru, and in many other lands. In many places the offering up of animals ultimately, in whole or in part, took the place of that of human beings. In the same way, if we turn to the words of the thoughtful or of the careless among men in the past, whether we appeal to a Plato or to a Horace, we find the same confession of inability to do what one knows to be right. The existence of such words

as "sin," "bad," "evil," "wicked," found as they are in all languages, proves that the whole human race agrees in confessing what we have ourselves learnt from our own experience, that moral evil exists in the world, and that men are not what they should be.

Now we cannot say this of the rest of creation, animate or inanimate. It is clear that, somehow or other, man is wrong in some way, that he is not what he feels he ought to be, might be, is meant to be. That is to say, he is conscious that his spirit is not in harmony with the will of God. To what is this *fact* of experience to be attributed? Defect of physical or limitation of mental faculties does not produce this sense of separation from God, this dread of punishment, this consciousness of deserving it of which we speak. It is due to conscience, which is, as Hoffman says,[1] "the organ for the manifestation of Divine Righteousness in human self-consciousness."

Evolutionists rightly or wrongly assert that certain portions of our frame contain in themselves the proof that we were once physically in a position different from that which we at present occupy, that we bear in our bodies evidences that man has descended from the lower animals. That is to say, our race still retains marks that it was, so to speak, in a different condition physically from the present one. The same argument would seem to apply still more fitly and with greater weight to the evidence which conscience bears to the fact that man was once in harmony with God in will and disposition. It is not intellect that we have lost, nor is it physical degeneration that we

[1] Hofmann, "Das Gewissen," ii.

lament, but it is some moral lapse in our nature which renders us prone to sin against the light and guidance of conscience, and which makes it difficult to realise spiritual things. It is impossible to suppose that the whole human race is in error in this conviction, that conscience is a phantom which troubles us, or that God has produced in our minds an idea which is not true. Nor can we say that conscience is merely intended to make us aim at higher things, and so lead to the moral advancement of the race. If this were all, conscience would manifest itself merely as a spur, an incitement to effort. But it does more than this, it distinctly reproaches and condemns us for what we have done amiss, and approves or condemns not so much our actions as our motives. The conviction of sin, which, as we have seen, man has everywhere manifested, must undoubtedly be intended to lead us to seek for pardon, for peace with God. But to confess this is to admit the reality of our need for pardon. The evidence of our conscience therefore, and of the experience of our proneness to sin and of the difficulty of rising higher morally, shows that somehow our nature has become perverted, that it is not what it once was and what God intended it to be. This is not the case of a defect originally inherent in human nature, it is an instance of a loss. We are not unhappy because we have no wings, however useful they might be. But we are so because we have lost our innocence and have fallen short in that respect of what man originally was. Thus our own being agrees with a very widely spread tradition in its assertion of a Fall, a moral declension. "This

doctrine of the fall of the human race," says Lenormant,[1] "through the misuse which its progenitors made of their freewill is an eternal truth. . . . It furnishes the only solution of the dread problem which is constantly returning to present itself to the human mind." That problem is the existence of moral evil in the world.

Connected somehow with moral evil is the immense amount of physical evil and sorrow which we see around us. Experience shows us that there is some connexion often, perhaps in some sense always, between the two, though the sorrow and suffering do not always fall upon the person who committed the sin, or upon him only. The evil results of drunkenness, for example, fall not only upon the drunkard but also upon his innocent relatives. The big brewer or the hotel-keeper tempts to the sin, but does not always here receive its punishment, except perhaps in the hardening of conscience and in moral blindness. The same is true of almost all other sins also. There is something very mysterious in suffering, and not least in the fact that it often produces good results, though not always to the sufferer himself. A patriot's, a martyr's, death may rouse a nation as with a trumpet-call to fight for and to win civil or religious liberty. The blood of the martyrs has in all ages been the seed from which the Church in each land has sprung. A mother's pangs usher the child into the world. Suffering is often the result of sin, but vicarious suffering seems to be part of the scheme of Nature as we know it. There is, of course,

[1] "Origines de l'Histoire," i. 107.

a great mystery in this. Why a Perfect Moral Being does permit moral evil in the world, since it must be contrary to His will, being contrary to His Nature, we cannot fully understand, though we recognise the fact that there could be no merit, no possibility of choosing good, unless there were also the possibility of choosing and doing evil, since there would be no freedom of will. But perplexing as this question is, that of the existence of suffering often proves still more so. We are often completely stunned by observing the amount of suffering which the innocent in so many cases have to endure. The good in all ages have been ill-treated, the noblest of men have generally suffered most. Socrates was condemned and executed on the charge of corrupting the youth of Athens, while the most abandoned of men gained wealth and honour and power. A Paul languishes in prison, a Felix wantons in luxury and pomp. Some of the kindest, gentlest, best of men and women have hardly had an hour's intermission of pain. Such things have often led men who observed them to doubt the goodness of God. He seems to have condemned men to suffer, and yet to be incapable of suffering Himself. We ask ourselves whether He indeed cares for His creatures or feels any sympathy with their woes.

Mere reason fails to give any answer to the question. It leaves us in the greatest perplexity, for on the one hand it assures us that God must be just and good, while on the other it asserts that a God who, being almighty, still permits such things to happen, cannot possibly be either.

Here the Bible steps in and directs our eyes towards the most wondrous spectacle in all history, the Man of Sorrows. If we, in opposition to His own express statements, persist in regarding Him as a mere man, then our difficulties are increased rather than lessened by the sight. For we see the most holy, the most loving, the best of men, enduring the most terrible agony and dying a lingering death of shame. That He endured it willingly in submission to God's will does not lessen the mystery. But if we accept the clear statements which He made about Himself, then a ray of light pierces the gloom. He claims to be the Son of God, one with His Father: He states that ere the world was He shared His Father's glory; that He came down from heaven to seek and to find the lost; that He lays down His life for His sheep. *If this be true;* if Christ be Perfect God as well as Perfect Man; if, being in His Divine Nature incapable of suffering, He assumed our flesh and blood and became Man that He *might* suffer; then we begin to see that God does care for us.[1] The complete Union of the Divine and Human in Christ in one Person is an explanation, the only possible explanation, the only possible justification

[1] Compare Browning's lines ("An Epistle")—

> "The very God! think Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
> So, through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself!
> Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine:
> But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
> And thou must love Me, who have died for thee!'"

of God (with reverence be it spoken) which we can conceive. If, being God, He became Man to share our sufferings, by doing so He has lightened them. If He suffered with us and for us, then we are sure that we are permitted to bear suffering for good as well as for wise ends, that God pities us and loves, and that therefore, however, terrible our sufferings may be, yet He who "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" for us, assuredly "doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." The Psalmist could tell us, but not prove to us, that "Like as a father pitieth his own children, even so is the Lord merciful unto those that fear Him." But Christ goes further still, and by His life and His death, by His teaching and by His prayer for His murderers, shows that God, the Heavenly Father whom He reveals to us, loves all, even "the unthankful and the evil." A glance at the Crucified enables us, though not fully to solve the problem of suffering (which is not revealed because probably beyond our present faculties), yet to believe that it is capable of solution. Ever since Christ's death the best of men have felt nerved and strengthened, comforted and reproved by the thought so well expressed by the author of the "De Imitatione Christi:" "Tota vita Christi crux fuit et martyrium, et *tu* tibi quæris requiem et gaudium?"

If Christ suffered, it is clear even on the testimony of His enemies that He suffered for no sins of His own. This being so, it would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that He suffered in some way for the benefit of others. We may not be fully able to comprehend

why this was necessary, but of the fact there can be no doubt. This conclusion is supported by His own express statements and those of His chosen followers. "I am the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep. . . . I lay down My life for the sheep."[1] "Christ . . . suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again: . . . Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on[2] the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed."[3] The vicarious sufferings of Christ are not without analogy in many other instances of suffering borne for the benefit of others. We have seen that there are not only many cases in which the innocent suffer for the guilty, but others in which guilt does not seem to come in at all as the direct cause of suffering. When this is so, we cannot correctly speak of the suffering as "punishment." Even when there is guilt, if an innocent person bears suffering because of it and to save the guilty, it is impossible to say, with correct use of language, that the innocent was *punished*, or that he actually took on him the *guilt*. If we remember this, we shall avoid a stumbling-block which the use of loose or figurative expressions has placed in many people's way. Christ could not become guilty of sins He did not commit, nor can the sufferings He voluntarily underwent for the sake of the guilty be, strictly speaking, called *punishment*. If an innocent person lays down his life for his guilty

[1] John x. 11, 15. [2] Or "up to." [3] 1 Pet. ii. 21–24.

friend, it is impossible to hold that the *guilt* was really transferred from one to the other, or that the innocent man was *punished*. But it is quite possible that the heart of the guilty person might be so touched by his friend's love and self-devotion that he might realise more clearly than before the heinousness of his offence. This might conceivably lead to heartfelt repentance and reformation of character and conduct. It might even lead him to offer himself for punishment in accordance with the law he had broken. If he did so, and if that punishment were rigorously inflicted, still his friend would not have died in vain. The punishment itself might even be turned into a means of still further improving the criminal's character. Good would thus have come out of evil, at least to some extent. Nor can we believe that the benefactor would be really *injured*, even though unjustly put to death. Even Socrates has taught us that an evil man cannot *injure* a good one, though he may imprison, torture, or even kill him. As the guilty man had repented and tried to make reparation for his crime, his friend's love and devotion would not have been in vain. He may even be said to have removed his friend's guilt, to have borne it away from him. May not *at least* this much be denoted by the doctrine of Christ's vicarious death for sinners?

That He has actually effected this is clear. The thought of His love, which was stronger than death, though so utterly undeserved on our part, the thought of what our sins cost Him, *has* produced repentance and a turning to God in many a heart, and changed many a life which nothing else could change. Some

of us have ourselves experienced this in our own case. Those who have really believed that He did really die for their sakes, that men's sins, their own among the number, were the cause of His death, have had their hearts filled with gratitude to Him, and have loved Him because He first loved them. Recognising this love as a manifestation of God's, they have loved the Father. The change in Peter's character, which rendered the perjured coward and renegade brave, devoted, and patient enough after Christ's Resurrection to labour, to dare, and to die at last for his Lord, though all through the rest of his life knowing on the authority of his Master's own [1] words that his reward on earth would be to share Christ's sufferings by a martyr's death in his old age, is only one example of this result out of very many. Our own age has seen innumerable other instances in every rank of life, in men of every kindred, tribe, and tongue, who have been animated by the same spirit, who have been faithful unto death. However much or however little we may understand of the doctrine of the Atonement, as it is called, it is clear that Christ's death *has* brought many men back to God and good who had wandered far from Him. In such cases an *atonement* (at-one-ment), a reconciliation, has actually been effected, and its possibility is no longer a matter of doubt.

Those who have thus turned to God through faith in Christ, know from their own experience, from the testimony of their conscience, that their guilt is removed and their sins forgiven. The barrier which

[1] John xxi. 18, 19.

once existed between themselves and God exists no more. It is not that they have escaped from the abject dread of punishment. Temporal punishment as the necessary consequence of their sins may still come. If it does, they will bear it patiently, nay gladly, for the sting has been removed from it. But it is not of escape from punishment here or hereafter that they think, though it is difficult to believe that even hereafter Peter, and such as Peter, will ever forgive themselves, or cease to feel sorrow for their ingratitude and disloyalty to their Master. They may or may not be able to explain how or why it is, but they *know* that God has "put away" their sins. Not that any change has been produced in God's character or purpose. That would be impossible to believe and terrible to conceive of, if conceivable. No, but the man himself has changed, he has been "brought into harmony" with God, as Plato would say; he has been "reconciled to God," as the Apostle says. Again we say that those who have experienced this, however unable to grasp all the fulness of meaning of the Atonement, can have no more doubt of its reality than of their own existence. The thunderclouds have vanished, the sky is clear, the sun, which, though unchanged, had disappeared from our sight, now once again shines in full splendour and warmth. We behold, as never before, the glory, the mercy, the love of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

If it be asked *how* Christ's death could benefit us, even granting that analogy leads us to expect that in some way it would, that experience proves that it

did, and that the Bible asserts that it was intended by Him to do so, we must in reply confine ourselves to a single aspect of the matter. The hatred He aroused in the heart of the worldly and the hypocrite by His goodness and sincerity and open reproof of their sins and by His fearless opposition to all that was false and wrong, all that shut men out from God, all that gave them false thoughts of God, was shown in its true hideousness by its resulting in His judicial murder. Sin revealed itself in its awful wickedness, its hatred of God and good, its terrible power of perverting the human character, when it led men to reject and crucify the one Perfect Man. Men saw revealed as by a lightning-flash their alienation from God. They saw God in Christ, they saw themselves in His murderers, they heard Him praying even for them. How could they avoid hating sin, which had led to such cruel treatment of their truest friend? The veil which art and poetry, tradition and hypocrisy, formalism and ignorance, had cast over the hideousness of sin was torn away. Men saw themselves as in God's sight, saw their weakness and their guilt, saw too to what a fearful abyss of wickedness their sins were hurrying them, and saw the marvellous love of God, which had led Him to give His Son for their deliverance. Though before this men had fancied they knew what sin was, they had never in the same degree realised its true nature. Hence it is that even now it is only in the light of the Cross of Christ that any of us can really see what a fearful thing sin is, and how hateful it must be in the sight of Him who is "of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

If for no other reason than this, Christ's death was for our benefit, our sins nailed Him to the cross, and by His stripes we are healed, if we will. He died for us that we might not die eternally the spiritual death which is "eternal sin."[1]

Christ's death means far more than this. We have not explained or tried to explain the Agony in the Garden, the Words from the Cross, the deep meaning of the ancient Jewish, the ancient heathen, nay, the once universal institution of sacrifice, which undoubtedly typified His death for us. These, and many other things, are too deep for us now to enter into at all fully. The Bible itself does not fully explain them all, though it does explain much that we do not propose to discuss. But whatever else Christ's death means, whatever other benefits it offers the believer, it has at least done what we have already pointed out.

Has Christ failed to accomplish the purpose for which He came, for which He lived, for which He died? To answer this question we must know what that purpose was. He tells us that He came to reveal the Father, and to draw all men unto Himself, and through Himself unto the Father. In other words, He came to undo the Fall. The Fall was brought about by our choosing self rather than God, selfwill rather than God's will, and that occurred through our accepting false views of God, disbelieving in His love, distrusting His care. This has been done not by Adam alone, but by every one of us since his

[1] Ἔνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἁμαρτήματος, Mark iii. 29. This is now recognised as the true reading.

time. "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every man to his own way." The natural, the only possible remedy that we can conceive of, was to lead men to recognise God, to love Him, and thus freely and fully to prefer His will to their own. As they had chosen evil rather than good, they required now, with perfect freedom of choice, to choose good and reject evil. As we are at present constituted, we can conceive of no possible means more likely to accomplish this than the method adopted by Christ. Nothing but Love drives out selfishness. It is only when Love smites the chord of Self that it breaks and passes in music out of sight, as Tennyson sings. Love must be freely given, it cannot be constrained any more than mercy can. How then is love to God to be produced in men's hearts? Nature itself to some extent suggests the reply. Love towards his parents is produced in a child's heart only through his perception of a father's or a mother's love. It is experience of his parents' kindness, the observation of their care for him in sickness, seeing how they spend sleepless nights and toil weary days for him, that proves to the child their affection, and kindles in his little heart some faint reflexion of that great love which has been manifested towards him in deed, and not only in word. As it is God who has taught us love, as He deigns to call Himself our Father[1] in heaven, we might almost expect that He would in somewhat the same way draw near to

[1] "This conception of God, which is the child's, is evidently the only one which can be universal, and therefore for us it is the only one which can be true." (Ruskin, "Modern Painters," iv. 87.)

men, and by so doing appeal to the purest, the noblest, the strongest, and most unselfish of human feelings. Love is not under the dominion of Reason, nor does it need Reason to enable one to be affected by it. Hence the Gospel message was and is equally adapted for all, equally needed by all. It appeals, unlike philosophy, not to the wise only but to the unwise also; not to the learned only but to the unlearned and to babes. Not the wisest of men can fully enter into the Divine mystery; not a child is there who cannot accept it fully. Justice demanded that the method employed should be such as to appeal to all,[1] to reach all who did not themselves oppose its influence. No other conceivable method but the one which the Gospels point out as adopted by God in Christ would have had any chance of success, or would have fulfilled these conditions. In His choice of a method God's infinity was conditioned by our finiteness, by the limitations of our nature. The history of the Church of Christ proves that the Gospel message has ever been "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth," to whatever race or nation, rank or class, land or age, he

[1] "Quæ autem maior caussa adventus Domini, nisi ut ostenderet Deus dilectionem suam in nobis, commendans eam vehementer? Quia, quum adhuc inimici essemus, Christus pro nobis mortuus est. . . . Et ipsum Deum, quoniam prior dilexit nos, et Filio suo unico non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit eum, si amare pigebat, saltem nunc redamare non pigeat. Nulla est enim maior ad amorem invitatio quam prævenire amando: et nimis durus est animus, qui dilectionem si nolebat impendere, nolit rependere. . . . Manifestum est nullam esse maiorem caussam, qua vel incohetur vel augeatur amor, quam quum amari se cognoscit qui nondum amat, aut redamari si vel posse spirat, vel iam probat, qui prior amat." (Augustine, "De Catech. Rudibus," vii.)

may belong. As the author of "Ecce Homo" well says,[1] "As love provokes love, many have found it possible to conceive for Christ an attachment, the closeness of which no words can describe, a veneration so possessing and absorbing the man within them, that they have said, 'I live no more, but Christ lives in me.' Now such a feeling carries with it of necessity the feeling of love for all human beings. It matters no longer what quality men may exhibit: amiable or unamiable, as the brothers of Christ, as belonging to His sacred and consecrated kind, as the objects of His love in life and death, they must be dear to all to whom He is dear. . . . That Christ's method, when rightly applied, is really of mighty force, may be shown by an argument which the severest censor of Christians will hardly refuse to admit. Compare the ancient with the modern world; 'look on this picture, and on that.' One broad distinction in the characters of men forces itself into prominence. Among all the men of the ancient heathen world there were scarcely one or two to whom we might venture to apply the epithet 'holy.' In other words, there were not more than one or two, if any, who, besides being virtuous in their actions, were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and, besides abstaining from vice, regarded even a vicious thought with horror. Probably no one will deny that in Christian countries this higher-toned goodness, which we call 'holiness,' has existed. Few will maintain that it has been exceedingly rare. Perhaps the truth is that there

[1] "Ecce Homo," pp. 156–161.

has scarcely been a town in any Christian country, since the time of Christ, where a century has passed without exhibiting a character of such elevation that his mere presence has shamed the bad and made the good better, and has been felt at times like the presence of God Himself. And if this be so, has Christ failed? or can Christianity die?"

The Atonement or reconciliation of man to God is in one sense finished, in another unfinished. It is finished in this sense, that Christ, the second Adam, the new Head of the human race, succeeded where Adam failed, chose God's will rather than His own,[1] and so made His human will harmonise with God the Father's. As by one man came sin and death, by one man came righteousness and the eternal life. In this sense, at least, Christ could say, "It is finished."[2] But in another sense the work is still going on. As each man has sinned, so each man must choose God's will rather than his own, so that the Fall may be undone. Hence each man needs, to counteract the tendency to evil which he has inherited (and upon which the proved facts of heredity have in our own time thrown so much light), a change of heart, what Christ Himself calls the New Birth.[3] He tells us that this is produced in the believer's heart by the direct influence of God's Holy Spirit. Is this a theory only or a fact? Does such a change occur? The history of the world is full of instances of it ever since the time of Christ. Many of us know such cases; some of us have

[1] Matt. xxvi. 39, 42; Mark xiv. 36.
[2] John xix. 30. [3] John iii. 3, 5.

ourselves experienced it. A time has come in the life of every one of us who is a true Christian when such a change took place. In some it may have occurred in childhood, in others later. But those of us who have experienced it can say with the Apostle that for us "all things have become new." We feared, perhaps we hated, God; we loved evil and hated good. Then, as into a dark cavern, shone the light of God's love one day into our hearts; perhaps when we were in misery and despair, praying for pardon and peace. Suddenly all things changed: we realised God's love, our hearts opened to His Spirit's gracious influence, and expanded with the joy of acceptance and forgiveness. Even the outer world seemed changed: the sun seemed to shine more brightly, there was a new note of praise in the song of the bird, the very heaven seemed brighter. Our cares were touched by the loving hand of Christ, and half their weight seemed to be gone. Life took a new meaning, self no longer seemed the centre of our being: love to God and man had entered our hearts. Who that has felt this can ever forget it? Since that day troubles may have come, sorrow may have visited us, pain may have tortured, temptation assailed us, but the realised love of God has enabled us to endure "as seeing Him who is invisible."

Thus, one by one, men are turned to God, if they will. There is no compulsion, there is no grudging in this free gift of God. Men may resist if they will. But if they desire it, God will give them the new life which they need. A new vital principle is thus introduced into humanity, and it comes from

Christ, from union with Him. This is the secret of the Christian's strength.

The Gospel message is addressed to all men, is intended for all men, is the right therefore of all men alike. That it has not as yet been proclaimed to all men is due to our unfaithfulness to our Master and Lord. His purpose, His command, is clear. We have not yet fully obeyed it, and many who call themselves His followers are not even now desirous of seeing it obeyed, are not ashamed to say that they do not wish it obeyed. Such have not yet learned to know Christ.

What are we to say of those who through no fault of their own, but through our disobedience and unbelief, have not yet heard the Gospel? Is our unfaithfulness, while it may thwart God's purpose of love to *us* who have heard and not obeyed the Gospel, to thwart it for ever in their case also? This we cannot believe. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" On the other hand, we cannot, from our knowledge of mankind, believe that those who do not hear the Gospel can without it attain to the knowledge of God, which even the wisest and best of men before Christ's time failed to reach. Yet Christ promised "the restitution of all things." This must mean the final overthrow of evil and the undoing of the Fall: it must refer to the fulfilment of the prophecy that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." Our reason assures us that God's eternal purpose—the purpose for which man was created—shall not be finally frustrated. The Fall has already been *potentially*

undone, so that those who will may recover from it. But if the ancestors of the human race had never sinned, the possession of freewill would yet have been a test for every one of their descendants, and any of them might have chosen evil rather than good. So too now any of us who have heard the Gospel and professes faith in Christ may finally reject Him and choose evil rather than good. This shows that the theory that all men, whether or not they have rejected Christ, will ultimately be saved is not in accordance with reason or Scripture, and cannot be deduced from either the offer of salvation to all or from what Christ says about the restitution of all things. All may accept salvation, any may reject it to all eternity. In speaking of the future state one must remember that all our slight knowledge of it is derived from Revelation, and that we probably find so little revealed because we have neither language to express nor ability to understand what belongs to it. Hence what we say may be in error through our judgment being formed without sufficient knowledge of the facts of the case. This being premised, it may be said that it is hard to see any decisive reason for concluding that those who leave this world without—through *other* people's fault—having had an adequate opportunity of hearing and receiving the message of God's love should not have the Gospel message presented to them in the future state. But one thing is clear, that there as here men will always need Christ. Never to all eternity shall we outgrow our need of Him, who is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." It is clear that God changes not, that His love

cannot die, that there as here He "willeth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live." Hence it seems safe to conclude that, so long as it is *possible* for a man to be touched by the Divine Love, it will be offered to him. The record of Christ's preaching "to the spirits in prison"[1] appears to warrant us in saying this. It also seems to fill what would otherwise appear to be a terrible *lacuna* in the plan of Salvation. But there is another aspect of the matter which we must not shun. It is impossible to conceive of *anything* which can ever touch the heart of a man whose heart is unaffected by the revelation of God's love in Christ. There are men and women among us who have heard the Gospel from infancy, who may or may not profess to believe it, but whose hearts are "Gospel-hardened." This being so, it is inconceivable that any other means should, either in this world or in that which is to come, avail to bring them to God. Force will never be used. If Love cannot draw them, their case is hopeless, they are self-doomed to eternal separation from God. Nor will they be able to accept the Gospel whenever they please if they knowingly and wilfully reject it here. Character tends to final permanence in either good or evil,[2] hence there is conceivable the awful possibility of a man finally declining to turn to God. *He will never be forced to do so*, as that would destroy free will in the first place, and in the second because compulsion is contradictory to the nature of love, which cannot be so produced. "This is the condemnation,

[1] 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. [2] Rev. xxii. 11.

that Light is come in the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." [1] Such men may finally "reject the counsel of God, against themselves." [2] But though they may so far thwart God's gracious purpose to their own ruin, yet even this, we cannot doubt, will ultimately be in some way overruled to the accomplishment of good for the rest of humanity, just as the unbelief of the Jews and their rejection of Christ were overruled for the conversion of the Gentile world to the knowledge of God.

[1] John iii. 19. [2] Luke vii. 30.

CHAPTER VII.

BIBLICAL CRITICISM.

TO wise, learned, and honest criticism in every department of study we at the present day are deeply indebted. In the department of classical study it has given us readable and intelligible texts of the great Greek and Latin authors. In the department of history it has not only removed many misconceptions, but it has enabled us to enter far more fully into the daily life, the manners and customs, the thoughts and motives of men in the past, than could be done even a single generation ago. Even in these departments, however, it has been necessary to criticise the critics. They are but men after all, though they sometimes appear to forget the fact; and we should all remember the old saying, "Humanum est errare." Hence the conclusions of Niebuhr and his predecessors in Roman History, and those of Wolf with regard to the authenticity and genuineness of the Homeric Poems, have now been proved to have been carried too far. But the very fact that these theories were extreme in their opposition to the accepted ideas of the time rendered it necessary for them to be the more carefully tested. As a result, we are now in a position to speak on certain subjects

with much fuller knowledge, and much more certainty than we once could. We are obliged to admit difficulties which we had previously overlooked, to acknowledge that some of our ideas rested on but slender evidence. But, on the other hand, the critics have so completely failed to substantiate some very important parts of their theories, that their very failure adds to the conviction that much of that on which they have thrown doubt is reliable after all. Mr. Gladstone's investigations regarding Homer, for example, have led him to sum up the proved results (which may be said to have been gained from a thorough testing of Wolf's theory) somewhat in this manner: "It has been proved that the Iliad was not written by Homer, but by some one else who lived at the same time and *bore the same name!*" That theory, however, has led to a much more careful and intelligent study of Homer than would otherwise have been undertaken. Archæology has also been called in to bear testimony, and has proved the existence not of one but of several Troys, built, one after the other, on the same site. We know more of the weapons, the topography, the pottery, the art, the daily life of the ancient inhabitants of the Troad, of Mycenæ, of Tiryns, of Crete, now than was ever known before, even in classical times. This we, in large measure, owe to the interest in such subjects which was aroused by Wolf's extreme theory.

There is, of course, a style of criticism which does not command, or at least deserve, much respect, although not a few are found ready to accept its wildest hypotheses, which it dignifies with the name

of "proved results." A good example of this kind of thing is afforded by the Baconian Theory of the origin of Shakespeare's plays. To go at all deeply here into such a subject would be entirely out of place in a work intended for thoughtful men. The plan adopted by the propounder of the theory seems to have been a simple one. Moved with the noble ambition of suggesting something altogether novel and startling, he formed his hypothesis and boldly twisted the facts to make them, as far as possible, seem to support it. Those facts which were too stubborn to yield to this treatment were either ignored or were treated with a high and sovereign "critical" contempt. As a result Shakespeare has become a subject of interest to some who would not otherwise have read his works, while many people know more about him and Bacon than they would have otherwise done. On the other hand, some people have accepted the theory, though it can scarcely be seriously regarded as the greatest achievement of the end of the nineteenth century! It is fairly safe to say that in a few years the hypothesis will be remembered only as one of the signs of the unreliableness of many of the supposed "conclusions" of certain minds of our own time. Hastiness and decay of thought have, not too severely, been said to be among the distinguishing characteristics of the day.

Criticism being in the air, it was natural that it should be applied to the Bible. This was in itself a very desirable thing. It led to the careful recension of ancient manuscripts and old versions; and as a result we have a Greek text of the New Testament

which may compare favourably with that of the best preserved of the classical authors. It is hardly necessary to add that for the text and the authorship of the books of the New Testament we have a wealth of authorities absolutely without parallel in ancient literature. Hostile criticism as to authorship, date and genuineness has immensely assisted in supporting in all important respects the traditional view—or what ought rather to be called the *historical* view—with regard to these matters. A great deal of attention has also been devoted to the original text of the Old Testament. As critics have here far less material at their disposal, the results have not been quite so satisfactory, nor have we yet been able to substitute any other text for that of the Massôrâh of the Jews. Some readings may be acknowledged to be in all probability corrupt, and others doubtful. But making all allowance for these, which are, comparatively speaking, few, we may safely assert that no variety of reading which depends on anything better than conjecture alters in any one matter of even the least importance the received Hebrew (and in a few passages Aramaic) text of the Massôrâh.

Criticism such as this has done much good. But there has within recent years arisen a new style of criticism as applied to the Bible. This is the so-called "Higher Criticism." It professes to soar to higher things than merely verbal or textual matters. This school arose in Germany, where it seems to have to some extent divided into two sections, the leaders of which are Wellhausen and Dillmann respectively. In England it has most distinguished

supporters, and its influence at the present time is vast in the extreme. So popular has it become in many quarters that its supporters boast that all men of learning have embraced its tenets. As a natural result, nearly every one who wishes to gain a repute for learning, and many, in fact, who have no claim whatever to it, accept these new theories, in many cases without examination. Others have not the moral courage to expose themselves to the contempt which the new critics so lavishly bestow on those who venture to refuse assent to the hypotheses, or, as they prefer to assert, to the "proved results of the Higher Criticism." These "results" meet us everywhere—in Biblical Encyclopædias, in theological works, in reviews, and even in novels. A new "Daniel" —we should doubtless apologise to these critics for comparing them, even in a quotation, to one whom they regard as a mythical personage, but, unfortunately, Shakespeare lived before the Higher Criticism was born—has "come to judgment."

Now all really earnest men, all true scholars, one would think, would regret that such a spirit should be manifested by the advocates of the new criticism. Being human, it *must* be liable to err. If it is correct in its main conclusions, it has no need to fear being opposed, still less being candidly examined and criticised in its turn. Doubtless its most earnest supporters believe their system to be based on actual facts, and to be well able to bear examination. This makes it all the more surprising that one or two of them should condescend to make use of such unworthy weapons as abuse and contempt in defence of

their opinions. Such conduct naturally leads thoughtful men to feel that a system which, in the judgment of some of its leading advocates, seems to need the employment of these methods of discouraging inquiry must have its weak places. We remember the—perhaps apocryphal—advice of an unscrupulous lawyer to his colleague, "We have no case: abuse the other side." This may perhaps enable them for a time to frighten and browbeat timid members of the great jury who are now trying the case, "The Bible *versus* the Higher Criticism," but it does not tend to secure justice. In the end nothing but truth can stand.

No cause is helped for long by conduct such as this. It would be strange indeed if all the study which the Higher Critics have devoted to the criticism of the Bible were to be utterly without result; hence earnest men desire to learn from them whatever they can *prove* to be true. We Christians are followers of Him who is the Truth as well as the Way and the Life, and we fear nothing that can add to our knowledge of the truth. But contemptuous treatment of their opponents and undue self-exaltation on the part of the critics are for many reasons regrettable, and not least because these things are apt to repel men from thoroughly examining their statements with the object of learning from them what is true. Again and again when reading the writings of certain leading critics have we sorrowfully felt that no blessing can rest on researches which are carried on so boastfully and so irreverently, and the supposed results of which are stated with such a total want of Christian courtesy

and consideration for the feelings of other people. These things ought not so to be.

We have had so many new theories brought forward during the last fifty years or so, on one subject or another, that some of us have learned not to be too hasty in embracing them. To say nothing of the theory that Bacon wrote many of the best of Shakespeare's plays, we have seen the rise, the almost universal acceptance and the fall of Strauss' Mythical Theory of the origin of the Gospels. The same is true of the Great Solar Myth and of Renan's Positivist attempt to explain away the Gospel portraiture of Christ. Materialism rose, prevailed very largely, and is now dying away. Darwinism has still very many adherents, but (as we have seen), as far as the descent of man is concerned, recent investigations are confessedly against it rather than in its favour. Evolution, in order to meet the difficulties it has encountered, has had to be largely Christianised. Examination has disproved those theories, once largely accepted as facts, which asserted that life could spring from the non-living. The discovery that the earth was in a gaseous state in times much more recent than those in which, by limitless drafts upon the "Bank of Time," certain theories represented the evolution of animal life as in full progress, rendered acceptance of such theories somewhat difficult, and somewhat embarrassed those who had blindly received them as proved results of science. Recent investigations have rendered the modern theories of Animism and Totemism rather unstable. Going somewhat further back, we find the great Antiquity

of Man loudly insisted on, and a hundred thousand, three hundred thousand, or even longer periods of years, stated to have passed since his appearance on the earth. The investigations of Sir J. W. Dawson and others have thrown some doubt upon the correctness of such theories. We have already referred to Wolf's Homeric Theory, and to the conclusions regarding the credibility of early Roman History reached by Niebuhr. Dr. Johnson and all his contemporaries were quite certain that the poems of Ossian discovered by Macpherson were a fraud; but certain modern German scholars[1] accept them as genuine relics of the Middle Keltic period. These are only a few of the theories which some of us have had to consider. They are not all valueless; some of them contain much that is true. But none of them has been proved to be as indubitably correct as its partisans claimed. So we cannot be justly blamed for most strictly testing the principles upon which the Higher Criticism is based, and examining its proofs most carefully before accepting such a revolutionary theory as it is. In dealing with it briefly in this chapter, we wish to consider the Higher Criticism rather in its extreme form than in any other, because that is the form in which it is most aggressive.

Even after a careful study of some of the principal of the vast mass of works on the Higher Criticism which have appeared, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain with exactness what are the principles that underlie it. Every such theory ultimately rests on

[1] *E.g.* Dr. Ebrard in his "Handbuch der Mittelgälischen Sprache," pp. 3, 4.

certain assumptions. Professor Tullock has well pointed out that that of Renan, for example, rests on those of Positivism, but the writer himself does not state this. In works on the Higher Criticism we have conclusions offered us in abundance, theories, assertions, assumptions, but there is a singular lack of clear and definite statements of the *principles* which underlie them all. This is hardly fair. We know the root-assumptions of Darwinism, of Evolution, of such ancient philosophies as those of Democritus and Buddha; we see that the authors started with certain principles which they accepted as axiomatic, just as clearly as Descartes did when he made his "Cogito, ergo sum" the basis of his philosophy. If we can discover those of the Higher Criticism, we shall then be in a better position to test the value of its conclusions. For these principles must underlie its methods; and, if its exponents start to a great extent from the same assumptions, it is hardly to be wondered at if there be truth in the boast that they come to very much the same general conclusions.

In a brief outline we may thus state some of the chief of these "conclusions," before proceeding to investigate the principles on which they rest. The critics have not been content with asserting that the Pentateuch (or, as they prefer to say, the Hexateuch, including therein the Book of Joshua) is, in plain language, a forgery of late date, that the Patriarchs probably never existed, that the Psalms attributed to David were composed ages after David's death, that the Book of Daniel is a particularly clumsy forgery, that the Books of Chronicles are written with a

definitely fraudulent purpose. They have gone on to apply the same treatment, as far as possible, to the New Testament; to deny the Virgin Birth of Christ, the truth of His miracles, His Resurrection, the existence of anything worthy of the name of Prophecy, —in a word, almost every single tenet of the Christian faith. Our Lord's own most positive assertions, for example as to the authority of the Old Testament, are refused credence, because they are so clearly opposed to the "conclusions" of the Higher Critics. And yet the latter demand the most absolute credence for the most rash and baseless of their own theories, as if the inspiration which they deny to the writers of the Bible were undoubtedly their own. Some of them venture to alter in the most authoritative manner certain of the most important passages in the Old Testament; as, for instance, that in which the words "Mighty God, Father of Everlastingness"[1] are applied to the promised Child. This they do absolutely without a shred of manuscript authority, simply and solely by conjecture. Nor do they even offer such conjectures with becoming diffidence, but boldly alter the text in a manner that would not be tolerated for an instant in the case of the editing of a play of Sophocles, or even of Aristophanes. This is not criticism, higher or lower: it is vandalism of a not particularly exalted type. The Higher Critics, as a general rule, deem nothing too sacred for examination, often for irreverent examination, *except* their own *dicta.* They hold themselves at perfect liberty to deny every statement in the Bible; to presume the existence of "pious fraud"

[1] Isa. ix. 6. This is the meaning of the Hebrew.

even in the writings of Apostles and Prophets, to say nothing of something very similar in the best-authenticated words of Christ Himself; to reject and endeavour to overthrow every single doctrine of the martyrs' creed. But no one must presume to question the absolute correctness of their latest and perhaps most unfounded assertions, on penalty of being ruled out of court as an ignoramus. This, they say, he must plainly be, since the results of the Higher Criticism are "accepted by every man of learning."

The results which they invite us to accept are, it must be owned, sufficiently startling. We shall require absolutely irresistible evidence in support of them before we resign our Christian faith at any man's bidding. For it is in vain that some of the critics assure us that we may still revere the Scriptures, nay more, that the cause of the Christian religion is advanced by their "discoveries." We Englishmen have not yet learnt to revere "pious frauds," to accept forgeries as containing a message from God. If the critics are right, Christianity's last hour has struck. Even Professor Huxley, who cannot be supposed to be biassed in favour of the Gospel, is reported (in his "Life," written by his son) to have spoken thus of the Higher Criticism: "If Satan had wished to devise the best means of discrediting 'Revelation,' he could not have done better."[1]

[1] "Life," vol. ii., p. 118. The professor writes thus with regard to Canon Driver's attempt to maintain that, while the Pentateuchal cosmogony is incorrect, it may yet be held to contain theological truth. The remark shows how the "conclusions" of the Higher Critics appear to outsiders. In another letter (to the Rev. Estlin Carpenter) Professor Huxley clearly states how the Higher Criticism seems to him to help

As far as can be ascertained from the writings of Wellhausen,[1] the main principle upon which the Higher Criticism rests is the tacit or open denial of the possibility of either miracle or prophecy, or at least the denial that these manifestations of the supernatural have ever occurred. Hence it is supposed to follow that any book which contains the mention of miracles is, by that very fact, proved to have assumed its present form long after the occurrence of the events narrated therein, sufficient time having to be allowed for the growth of the "mythical element" in it. In the same way it is quietly assumed that any apparent prediction in reality either has not the meaning ascribed to it, or is a "prophecy" written after the event, and that it must therefore be more or less a "pious" (or, rather, an impious) fraud. It is also assumed that the Bible is just like other books, and must be judged by the same criteria. Of course if we assume this, and also assume that miracles have never occurred and that "prophecies" were always delivered after the event, we are absolutely compelled to set aside as best we may all evidence of the

in overthrowing Christianity. "Accept my best thanks," he writes, "for 'The First Three Gospels'" (a work bearing which title his correspondent had written and sent to him), "which strikes me as an admirable exposition of the case, full, clear, and calm. Indeed the latter quality gives it here and there a touch of humour. You say the most damaging things in a way so gentle that the orthodox reader must feel like the eels who were skinned by the fair Molly—lost between pain and admiration. I am certainly glad to see that the book has reached a second edition: it will do yeoman's service to the cause of right reason"—that, is of infidelity. ("Life," vol. ii., p. 266.)

[1] Especially his "Composition des Hexateuchs" and "Prolegomena der Geschichte Israels."

authenticity and genuineness of the books of the Old and New Testament, or to believe that their authors were what we should now call credulous fools or wilful deceivers. But these are hardly the classes of men to whom we should be inclined to go for religious instruction. Is it really uncritical to object to such a manifest *petitio principii*?

We have already seen that it is impossible to *prove* (though easy to assert) the *a priori* impossibility of the miraculous. The occurrence of the Resurrection of Christ and the fact that we do find in the Bible prophecies which could not possibly have been written after the event disprove the assumptions upon which the Higher Criticism rests. The evidence which we have for the date of the composition of the Gospels and of most of St. Paul's Epistles is a fact which is worth any number of theories, and one with which such theories as those we are discussing are in open conflict. The inductive method by which all the great discoveries of modern Science have been made requires that a mass of facts should first be collected, and that a hypothesis should then be tentatively started to account for these observed facts. This is tested by the observation of all fresh facts which may have previously been overlooked, or may be newly discovered, and is modified or given up, if necessary, in favour of another hypothesis which harmonises better with the facts. It is in this manner that the Law of Gravitation, the Law of the Conservation of Energy, and all other known Laws of Nature have been formulated and finally demonstrated. This is the only true Scientific method. In ancient times a

different method was too commonly adopted. Philosophers first got their theory, evolved generally from their own inner consciousness, and then collected as many facts as possible that seemed to square with the theory. The facts which did not were laid on the bed of Procrustes, and dealt with in the approved manner adopted by that ancient "Knight of Industry." Hence came the theories that all things were formed from water, that all things were formed from air, and many others, which, in their day, were earnestly maintained by certain men of great ability. No real advance in science has ever been made in this way. It is, therefore, a most regrettable thing to find the Higher Critical School in our own day (and not this school alone) deserting the true critical method of induction and relapsing into the unscientific method of very early days. The fact that they have done this is undeniable, and their adoption of this method should lead us to weigh well every one of their "results" before accepting it.

The assumption that the Bible is "just like any other book, and must be dealt with accordingly," is another absolutely unwarrantable *petitio principii*, plausible as it seems at first sight. The reverse of this would be much more true. If the Bible is really just like any other book, it is not worth all the trouble which the critics are taking to destroy it. No one would care two straws about it if it were like other books. It is just because experience has shown that it is *unlike* any other book that the criticism of the Bible is of such absorbing interest. I have myself compared it with all the other so-called "Bibles of the

World," and find it in every true sense of the word unlike them. If we compare it with the Book of the Dead, the Vedas, the Avestâ, the Edda, the Qur'ân, this becomes evident at once. Where in these books do we find miracles like those of Christ recorded by eye-witnesses under similar circumstances? Where do we find prophecies which are clear in meaning, exact in detail, and which have undeniably been fulfilled? To take the Qur'ân, for example: we find Muḥammad therein stating definitely that God had not given him the power to work miracles, nor are any miracles therein attributed to him. Is it like the Bible in this? The Muḥammadans try to find the prophetic element in the Qur'ân, but are able to allege only one single instance, and that one which, it is acknowledged, will not bear examination. If we turn to the books of Buddha's philosophy, or to the philosophical writings of Confucius, Mencius, Lao-tse, or to those of the Greek philosophers, or to those of modern Europe, where do we find any real likeness to the Bible? The morality, theology, and history of the Bible differ widely from those of any other ancient book. Nor is it like them in its results upon the world.[1] Where

[1] Even M. Renan says of the Old Testament: "Seul, entre tous les peuples de l' Orient, Israël a eu le privilège d'écrire pour le monde entier. C'est certainement une admirable poésie que celle des Védas, et pourtant ce recueil des premiers chants de la race à laquelle nous appartenons ne remplacera jamais, dans l'expression de nos sensations religieuses, les Psaumes, œuvres d'une race si différente de la notre. Les autres littératures de l'Orient ne sauraient être lues et appréciées que des savants; la littérature hébraïque est la Bible, le livre par excellence, la lecture universelle. Des millions d'hommes répandues sur le monde entier ne connaissent pas d'autre poésie. Il faut faire, sans doute, dans cette étonnante destinée, la part des révolutions

else do we find such lofty conceptions of God and of man's relation to Him? where else do we find such a character as that of Christ? where else is there such inexhaustible motive power for good? Because in certain other books we discover mention made of absurd and utterly unproved miracles, and rightly refuse to credit them, are we therefore in justice and reason compelled to reject those mentioned in the Gospels, although in character for the most part, and certainly in the reason for their occurrence and the evidence which supports them, the latter differ *toto cælo* from the former? Because there are doubtless some false coins in circulation, are we justified in refusing to believe that genuine coins exist at all? Such conduct would not in worldly matters earn for a man the character of being thoroughly reasonable and impartial; why should it do so in religious matters? Should we not rather, as sensible men, holding with La Rochefoucauld that "hypocrisy is a homage which vice renders to virtue," conclude that there would be no false pieces of money in circulation *unless* there were genuine ones?

The very fact that men have everywhere believed in the possibility of miracles and of prophecy, instead of leading us to reject all such things as absurd, should rather, on Aristotle's principle, prove to us that there is nothing contrary to reason in such a belief. Whether or not miracles have occurred is a mere

religieuses, qui, depuis le xvi^e^ siècle surtout, ont fait envisager les livres hébreux comme la source de toute révélation; mais on peut affirmir que si les livres n'avaient pas renfermé quelque chose de profondément universel, ils ne fûssent jamais arrivés à cette fortune." ("Hist. des Langues Sémitiques," vol. i., pp. 133, 134).

question of evidence, as we have seen in a previous chapter.

We are therefore led as reasonable men, after a careful examination of the *principles* upon which the Higher Criticism rests, to reject them as not only unproved but incapable of proof. This conclusion naturally tends to make us examine the supposed "results" of the working of these principles with great care, lest we should be misled by accepting them as proved facts.

It is hardly too much to say that every fresh discovery in Archæology has tended to shake the very foundations of the Higher Criticism. Hence it is not very usual to find an archæologist heartily supporting this system, while it would be difficult to point out a single Higher Critic who has especially distinguished himself in Archæology. We have seen the critics fighting tooth and nail against the acceptance of every new archæological discovery, and then trying in vain to accommodate it to their theories. Finally, they have been obliged to modify some of the details, often most important ones, of their arguments. Yet they seem determined to cling to the "results" of their theories, even when reluctantly forced to abandon their defence. For example, the existence of writing in early ages was denied. Doubt was cast as long as possible upon the interpretation of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Old Persian inscriptions. It was urged that the supposed non-existence of writing, or its very scanty use, rendered it impossible that such a long and finished composition as the Pentateuch could really date from the time of Moses. The oral transmission

of the Vedas was quietly ignored, though, even on the supposition that writing was as unknown in Egypt and Palestine in Moses' time as it was in India when the Rig-Veda was composed, no solid reason for denying the possibility of the early date of the Pentateuch could be deduced from such a presumption. We now know how very ancient the use of written (partly syllabic) characters is in Egypt and Babylonia, and that the Egyptian governors of districts in Palestine used the Babylonian script in their correspondence with the court of Pharaoh long before Moses' time. In both Egypt and Babylonia we have discovered long compositions, of a high order of merit, much more ancient than the time of the Exodus. Among these may be mentioned the Precepts of Ptaḥ Hotep, the Poem of Pentaur, the Travels of an Egyptian, the long inscriptions in the Pyramid of Unas, and parts of the Book of the Dead in Egypt; and, in Babylonia, the Epic of Gilgamesh, generally called the "Nimrod-Epos," and the recently discovered Laws of Ḥammurabi. Yet, in spite of all this, the critical position is supposed to be unshaken, nay, attempts are even made to force these discoveries to support the assumptions of the Higher Critics.

Again, we find it asserted that the account of the Babylonian invasion of Palestine in Abraham's time is entirely unhistorical. Evidence in support of this assertion there is none; whereas we have a great deal of evidence against it. The critics tried to prove their assertion by making another. They assured us that Palestine could not have then been at all known to the people dwelling in the Babylonian plain, and that

the latter could not have extended their conquests so far. On the evidence of inscriptions contemporary with the events which they record we now know that at least a thousand years earlier Palestine had been invaded and in some measure subdued by Babylonian armies. Several ancient monarchs of the Chaldean plain had carried their victorious arms to the Levant and the Red Sea. Abraham's own existence has been denied, and the names of Arioch, Chedorlaomer and the other kings mentioned in the fourteenth chapter of Genesis have been adversely criticised. The discovery of the Cappadocian contract-tablets, which are admitted to belong to the time of the so-called Ḥammurabi dynasty (which, according to Hommel[1] lasted from about 2050 to 1750 B.C.), enables us to know that the *name* Abram (Abu-rāma) at least was not unknown in those times, as the name occurs as that of a witness on one of those tablets.[2] The inscriptions of Arioch (Eri-aku) have been deciphered, and we find mention in contemporary inscriptions of Chedolaomer and Tidal, and of Amraphel also, since Hommel has proved that the latter is the king whose name has been hitherto read Ḥammu-rabi and Ḥammu-ragas.[3] The Tell-el-Amarna tablets prove the existence of a priest-king at Jerusalem[4] in very early times, and more than one of this king's letters to Pharaoh has been preserved. His position corresponds very closely to that which Melchizedik claimed in Abraham's time.

[1] "Die Altisraelitische Überlieferung," p. 141.
[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 143.
[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 193, *et seq.*
[4] Named 'Abd-Khiba or *Ebed-Tob* ("Servant of the Good One").

Here, again, we see the historical character of this part of Genesis proved. The critics declared the whole narrative of the wandering of Israel in the wilderness to be unhistorical. Recent research has shown that from the accounts given in the Pentateuch it is even now possible to identify many of the localities mentioned as halting-places of the exiles.

The critics have divided up the Pentateuch into a number of fragments which they entitle "Sources," and think that in its present form the book is many hundreds of years more recent than the time of Moses. If we confine our attention to the Book of Genesis, we there find reason to believe that they are correct in saying that the book in its present form has largely borrowed from earlier documents, which may still be recognised as in part incorporated in it. But this is practically confessed in the book itself in at least one place, in chapter xlix., where it is evident that Jacob's blessing to his sons and grandsons is quoted as if from a written document, or else in a form handed down orally. If this is so in one instance, we see no reason why it should not be so in another. The narrative in Genesis xiv. has all the appearance of an old document incorporated (with a few notes) into the text. But this does not in any way militate against the unbroken tradition of the Jews from the earliest times that Genesis is the work of Moses. *Nor is a historian generally deemed less, but rather more, worthy of credence if he consults and even quotes earlier and contemporaneous authorities.* It is most extremely probable that we thus have in Genesis extracts from very much more ancient documents. If so, this adds

greatly to its historical value. The preface to St. Luke's Gospel tells us plainly that the Evangelist in a somewhat similar manner consulted the best authorities before making a statement. The phænomenon is not without parallel in other parts of the Bible also.

On the other hand, we have very important evidence against the theory of the late date of the book, Attempts have been made to prove that it was composed after or during the Babylonian Captivity and largely from materials obtained at Babylon. We were assured that many of the early narratives in Genesis, for example that of the Flood, had been taken from Babylonian legends, as, for instance, from the Gilgamesh Epic. Any one who will compare the two accounts together will see that this is impossible. The theory is beset, however, with another difficulty. Legends of the Flood have been found among all nations. Some of these (as, for example, the Indian and the Greek) are well known. Now the theory tacitly takes it for granted that the Hebrews alone had no tradition of the Deluge, otherwise they would not have had (*ex hypothesi*) to borrow it from Babylon. When we find a tradition of the Flood even among the Maoris of New Zealand, we can hardly believe that the Hebrews had none!

On the other hand, traces of Egyptian influences are most clearly discernible in the book. A large part of it deals with Egypt in Joseph's time. It is not too much to say that not one single instance has been adduced which can prove that the writer of Genesis was not perfectly familiar with the Egypt of that distant day. How any one living in Babylon

hundreds of years afterwards could possible have acquired such knowledge at a time when archæology hardly existed is a question which any one but a Higher Critic would have considerable difficulty in answering. But this is not all. In little details we perceive, not only that the *writer* of the book was familiar with an Egypt already long passed away at the time of the Babylonian Captivity, but also that the *readers* were presumed to know it equally well. Now the book was evidently, like all ancient literature, intended, not for solitary students, but for the people at large. An Oriental at the present day, a Semite especially, when he for the first time learns that Joseph "shaved"[1] himself before going into Pharaoh's presence, marvels at this, and asks an explanation of a custom so different from his own ideas of propriety. *But no explanation is given in Genesis,* as must have been the case if the reader was not supposed to know the Egyptian rule in such matters as well as the writer did. Again, we find in Genesis certain ancient Egyptian words used in the Hebrew text without any explanation or interpretation. This does not refer to words which were common both to the Egyptian and to the Semitic languages, but to those which were Egyptian only. Examples of these are, the words used for the "reed-grass" or papyrus, the phrase wrongly translated "Bow the knee,"[2] and the Egyptian name given to Joseph, which we transcribe *Zaphnath-paaneah.*[3] We have now recovered the knowledge of ancient Egyptian, and are able to assert that these words belong to that language and

[1] Gen. xli. 14. [2] Gen. xli. 43. [3] Gen. xli. 45.

to it only. No ordinary Hebrew who had not lived in the country could possibly understand them, and yet they are given entirely without explanation. Why is this? Can we imagine such a thing if the book which contains the words had been composed about the time of the Babylonian Captivity? It must have been composed at a time when the Jewish nation knew ancient Egyptian, and that fact fixes the date of Genesis as not later than the death of the generation that came out of Egypt with Moses. Moreover, we find that the "commandment with promise"[1] bears a striking similarity to one of the Precepts of Ptaḥ-Hotep, "the oldest book in the world" as it has been called, which, literally translated, runs thus: "A son, accepting his father's words becomes an old man thereby,"[2]—that is to say, lives to grow old. Is it an entirely fortuitous occurrence that the Book of the Dead in some of its hymns uses the verbs "to create" and "to make" precisely in the same manner in which they are used in the first chapter of Genesis? Once more, we find in the old Egyptian "Story of the Two Brothers" a phrase again and again recurring, "Now it came to pass [at the end of many days] after these things," which is almost word for word the same as that which not unfrequently occurs in Genesis, "Now it came to pass after these things."[3] One incident in this "Tale of the Two Brothers" has been observed to bear a striking similarity to an

[1] Exod. xx. 12.

[2] "Šap se téṭ âtf-ef χeper-nef âaut χers," Papyrus Prisse, p. xvi., line 6.

[3] *E.g.* Gen. xxii. 1; xlviii. 1, etc.

event in the life of Joseph, and this is important as affording evidence that the writer of Genesis was even in that matter correct in describing Egyptian life as he did. All these things are quite irreconcilable with the theory of the late date of the Pentateuch, and especially the Book of Genesis Hebrew scholars well know that certain archaic forms of words occur in the Pentateuch. The progress which we have now made in Assyriology enables us to account for these. They are just the forms which analogy shows must have existed in Hebrew at one time, but which gradually became obsolete, much in the same way as "hosen," "eyen" and others have in English. When the historical view prevailed, it was quite natural to find such archaisms in the earlier part of Genesis.[1] On the theory that Moses used ancient documents, their occurrence is still more readily understood. But on the Higher Critical theory it is not so. Wellhausen is compelled to explain their occurrence by supposing them to have been used to give a more archaic air to the book. This, of course, distinctly implies fraud, as, in fact, the Higher Criticism must continually do, openly or by implication. But if the words were used with this purpose, it is evident that we must suppose that the forgers had ancient documents which they could imitate, for otherwise they could not have known that such forms once existed in Hebrew. This, however, militates against the arguments which have been used to prove that no really genuine ancient

[1] Some of them are again found in the Psalms and other poetical books, as was natural. But in Genesis they occur in *prose*.

documents remain. If the forgers used Mosaic forms of words to deceive the people into accepting their forgeries, then there must have existed genuine and well-known Mosaic documents at the time when the forgers lived. The teaching of such documents would be even better known than their phraseology or slight archaisms of language. Hence the forgeries would have had to incorporate such doctrines as well. So that, even on such a theory, there must be something genuine, after all, in the Pentateuch!

To overthrow the force of the argument for the Mosaic authorship of Genesis based on the Egyptian words in it, the critics have to prove to us the occurrence of the same phænomenon in books which admittedly belong to the period of the Babylonian Captivity. This is absolutely impossible. In such books we find, not Egyptian, but late Assyrian (or Babylonian) and Persian words, as might naturally be expected. But these we do not find in the Pentateuch.

The arguments which are supposed to prove that Deuteronomy was forged in Josiah's time would, if they proved anything, prove that the Latin Bible was forged just before Luther discovered it in the Augustinian Monastery. The habits, the religious observances, and the morality of the Hebrews in the times of the Judges and of the kings before Josiah were not more hopelessly opposed to the teachings of the Pentateuch than were some of the beliefs and practices of Christendom generally in Luther's day to those of the Gospel. If many of the tenets and much of the conduct of the Hebrews in the times we have mentioned were contrary to the Pentateuch,

and therefore prove it not to have been in existence then, would not many popular superstitions of the present day among professing Christians prove that neither Old nor New Testament exists to-day? Can the worship of the Virgin and the saints, the supremacy of Peter, and other such matters, be more easily reconciled with the New Testament than the worship of Baalim and Ashtaroth with the Pentateuch?

Wellhausen himself tells us how he formed his theory. Finding certain difficulty in understanding the compatibility of some of these practices on the part of the Hebrews with the teachings of the Pentateuch, it suddenly occurred to him, he says, as a happy thought, that possibly the idea of the existence of the tabernacle in the wilderness was borrowed from that of Solomon's Temple! The more he considered the matter, the more certain did he become that this view was correct: and on such a slender foundation his theory was gradually built up. We can all judge for ourselves whether such a theory removes difficulties or increases them. Certainly it does not explain *facts*, except on the supposition of the most incredible credulity and ignorance on the part of the people, and of the most astounding unscrupulousness and the most marvellous and recondite learning and surprising patience on that of their deceivers. The inception of such a scheme and still more its success are absolutely unparalleled in the history of human fraud. May we not say that the supposed credulity of the Hebrews has only one analogue, and that is the credulity of the many persons who have in real earnest accepted such an

amazing hypothesis and endeavoured to persuade others to follow their example?

To go into further details would lead us far beyond our present limits. Suffice it to say that to accept the "conclusions" of the Higher Criticism on the whole, is to go against the teachings of archæology, history, and the internal evidence which the Old Testament affords to its genuineness and its historical character. This does not preclude sober criticism; it does not forbid us to acknowledge that in the Pentateuch, and in other books, certain passages may possibly have been inserted by a later hand than that of the author of the original: it does not prevent even conjectural emendation of the text in passages which we have good reason to deem corrupt. In a word, all fair criticism, such criticism as makes allowances for all the facts of the case and distinguishes between theory and fact, must ever be welcome to the earnest student of the Bible. But such criticism as has produced the "Rainbow Bible" condemns itself. A criticism which sets at naught manuscript authority and the evidence of ancient versions in favour of the most arbitrary alterations and conjectures, and which then too often proceeds to support some novel theory by alleging the authority of such baseless "emendations," is not worthy of the twentieth century. The whole learned world would stand aghast were the critics to treat the text of any classical author as some at least of them have treated the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. They would be hissed off the stage.

Again, we say, we welcome all honest criticism; nay,

we desire to see much more careful, fuller and deeper investigation into the history, teaching, and composition of the Old Testament than it has yet received. Let us weigh all theories and all assumptions, but let us weigh *facts* as well. Archæology, internal evidence, quotations in the Psalms and the Prophets from what claim to be more ancient books, fulfilled prophecy, the traditional account of the origin of the various books, all have weight, and none must be set at nought merely because it happens to be opposed to a theory, however great the learning of its supporters may be. Let us not, however, tolerate the maxim that, if the facts are contrary to a theory, so much the worse for the facts. There still remain many unsolved problems, and we should aim at their solution. Investigation has already done much in the way of teaching us to appreciate more truly the value of the human element in Scripture. It has enabled us to understand better the "πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως" of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It has removed certain difficulties by giving us more just ideas of the extent and limits of Inspiration. Reverent examination may do very much more; irreverent criticism will doubtless be instructive in one way in the end. We shrink from no testing of the Bible, convinced that the truth will finally prevail. Even should our Canon of Scripture have to be remodelled, we may feel sure that in the end nothing essential to Christianity will be lost. We have learnt much from all previous attacks on the Bible, none of which have succeeded; we have therefore good grounds for our confidence that as it has been in the past so

it will yet be. "The word of our God shall stand for ever."

We have two verdicts on the Old Testament, one pronounced by Christ, and the other by the Higher Critics. The statements of Christ are at least as clear and definite in one way as theirs are in the other, and can as little be explained away. These two verdicts are absolutely contradictory to one another. No Higher Critic could honestly use the language which Christ does regarding the Old Testament. Christ's words do not forbid us to see a gradual progress in revelation as men became better fitted to receive higher and yet higher teaching—a gradual raising of men's conceptions of God and of the Moral Law. Nay rather, His own coming in the "fulness of time," the gradual development of His own teaching, and His expressed intention to "fulfil" or "fill up" what was lacking in the earlier revelation—all this implies such progress as part of God's plan for the education of the human race. But Christ tells us that He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. In the very strongest possible language He asserts their permanence in the future, and assures us that those who "hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."[1] Much of the Higher Criticism in its attitude towards Christ and His Resurrection goes far to prove, in our own experience, the awful truth of such a prophecy, and the close connexion which exists between the rejection of the Old Testament and the rejection of our Lord Himself.

[1] Luke xvi. 31.

If the principles and deductions of the Higher Critics are correct, Jesus of Nazareth falsely claimed to be the Son of God and to work miracles in support of that claim. He promised to rise again, and did not. He displayed an utter and painful ignorance regarding the true nature and origin of the forged books which He taught His disciples to accept as containing a Divine revelation. All this being so, what is left of Christianity? Should not our most advanced critics ask themselves in all seriousness the question which Strauss asked the men of his generation, "Sind wir noch Christen?"—"Are we still Christian?" Many Continental critics have asked it, and answered it in the negative, as he did. Certainly the residuum which the critics wish to leave us is not the Christianity of the Gospels, the faith for which the martyrs died, and by which the saints have ever lived. The critics may in some cases stop short themselves, if they can, of drawing the logical conclusion of their own teaching; but the ordinary straightforward man who has been beguiled into following them does not and cannot do so. What the critics may prefer to term a "legend," a "myth," a "pious fraud," other men whose sense of honesty is keener will rightly term a worthless forgery, if they believe the critics' "conclusions" to be correct. Christ is right or the critics are, and we have to choose between them. The statements of Christ are supported by all we know of His character, and by much incontrovertable evidence; those of His opponents are rendered at least extremely doubtful by the fact that their theories are based upon

assumptions which they cannot prove, and assertions which have already in many instances been disproved. "Will ye also go away?" "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

Nineteen hundred years has the battle raged round the Church on the Rock, and round the Word of God. The billows of Hebrew hatred, of heathen fire and sword, of heresy and Romish persecution, of the infidelity of Voltaire, Hume, and Paine, have dashed against it in vain. The Mythic Theory of Strauss, the pseudo-historical criticism of Renan, Positivism, Materialism,—all these have failed to destroy it Darkness is fading and the light must come. The New Testament stands to-day on firmer ground than ever before. There still rages against the Rock a great foe, that Higher Criticism which is high indeed, since it "schwebt im Luft," high above reason, history, evidence, sweeping along in its lofty flight till, like an ill-balanced air-ship of our day, it falls in ruin to the ground, and vanishes to the limbo of shattered philosophies and exploded theories. As we look back on the long line of our spiritual fathers' triumphs in all the past, let us nerve ourselves to meet this great enemy of Christianity in our own day, confidently devoting ourselves to prayerful and calm study, examination and investigation, believing the assurance of our Master and Lord, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."[1]

[1] Matt. xxiv. 35.

THE END.

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